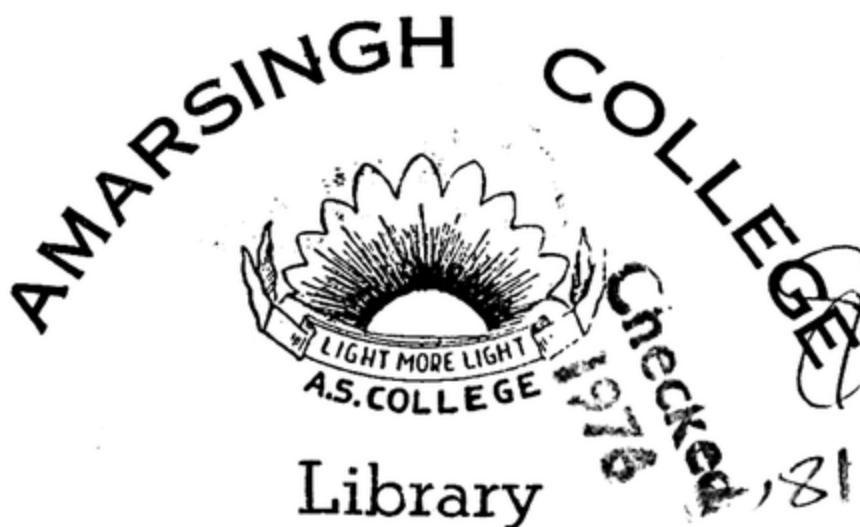


TO THE READER

KINDLY use this book very carefully. If the book is disfigured or marked or written on while in your possession the book will have to be replaced by a new copy or paid for. In case the book be a volume of set of which single volumes are not available the price of the whole set will be realized.



Class No. F 823

Book No. A 73 L

Acc. No. 78551

Checked

82



Students Store
RAGHUNATH BAZAR
Jammu Tawi

THE LAUGHTER OMNIBUS

Com-05
Al-88
110

THE
LAUGHTER OMNIBUS

TAKEN FROM

Punch

BY

ANTHONY
ARMSTRONG
'A.A.'

FABER & FABER LIMITED
24 Russell Square
London

*First published in November Mcmxxxvii
By Faber and Faber Limited
24 Russell Square London W.C.1
Second impression January Mcmxlix
Printed in Great Britain
At The Bowering Press Plymouth
All Rights Reserved*

Acc. No. 7855

LIBRARY

200. 400
7855
C. 10. 400
7855

This selection is published
by kind permission of the
Proprietors of *Punch*

CONTENTS

The Year's Prospects— <i>A. A. Milne</i>	page 1
Little Plays for Amateurs— <i>A. A. Milne</i>	4
Stories for Uncles— <i>R. C. Lehmann</i>	9
Military Intelligence— <i>P. à Beckett</i>	10
The Last Wopse of Summer— <i>F. Anstey Guthrie</i>	12
The Antique Clock— <i>F. Watson</i>	14
Motorieties— <i>Bulkeley Creswell</i>	18
'The Man in the Stalls'— <i>F. O. Langley</i>	20
How to Buy Things— <i>L. E. Filmore</i>	22
The Commercial Drama— <i>Hill Rowan</i>	25
Mr. Vade Mecum Abroad— <i>C. L. Graves, and E. V. Lucas</i>	28
George's Wife's Baby— <i>Stanley J. Fay</i>	29
On Choosing a Piano— <i>Reginald Rigby</i>	32
Très Sec.— <i>W. W. Blair Fish</i>	33
The Gift of Speech— <i>C. L. Graves, and E. V. Lucas</i>	34
Our Colonies— <i>W. Westrup</i>	36
Abracadabra— <i>E. B. Smith</i>	39
Winter Sport— <i>A. A. Milne</i>	42
Adjustments— <i>Bertram Smith</i>	46
Once Upon a Time— <i>E. V. Lucas</i>	48
The Hiccup— <i>R. C. Lehmann</i>	49
The Mænad— <i>E. V. Knox</i>	51
Our Annual Massacre— <i>S. E. Whitnall</i>	53
Should an Author Tell?— <i>A. Gordon Laws</i>	55
The Lesson— <i>A. A. Milne</i>	58
Our Literary Advice Department— <i>C. O. French</i>	62

Contents

Con— <i>P. R. Chalmers</i>	page 65
The Sluggard— <i>P. G. Wodehouse</i>	67
The Logic of Ententes— <i>O. Seaman</i>	70
The New News— <i>Arthur Eckersley</i>	71
A Candidate for the Force— <i>Ashley Sterne</i>	73
Tommy Brown, Auctioneer— <i>W. St. G. Drennan</i>	75
On the Spy-Trail— <i>W. St. G. Drennan</i>	79, 86
The Lonely Soldier— <i>Mrs. Vaizey</i>	82
The Wool-Winder— <i>R. C. Lehmann</i>	83
Defaulters— <i>C. J. Pezare</i>	91
The Watch Dogs— <i>F. O. Langley</i>	92
At the Front— <i>Alec Johnston</i>	96
A Question of the Nude— <i>C. Fox-Smith</i>	98
The Grass Valley Armistice— <i>S. H. Hyndman</i>	101
In the Air in 1940— <i>L. D. Brownlee</i>	104
The Best Man— <i>W. A. Wells</i>	106
Stew— <i>C. Fox-Smith</i>	108
The Watch Dogs— <i>F. O. Langley</i>	109
Intensive Culture of the Upper Lip— <i>Crosbie Garstin</i>	112
Lions at Play— <i>D. C. Ellis</i>	115
Our New Army of Women— <i>Frank Elias</i>	117
The Mud Larks— <i>Crosbie Garstin</i>	119
Cautionary Tales for the Army— <i>W. W. Blair Fish</i>	123
The Tap-Room— <i>D. C. Ellis</i>	124
The Super Pipe— <i>T. P. C. Wilson</i>	127
Our Innocent Subalterns— <i>H. N. Davey</i>	129
A Deal with China— <i>L. R. Brightwell</i>	130
The Wise and Foolish Virgins— <i>Owen Seaman</i>	132
The Mud Larks— <i>Crosbie Garstin</i>	133
The Sincerest Form of Flattery— <i>W. P. Lipscomb</i>	137
The Language Difficulty— <i>Mrs. Mackay</i>	141

Contents

History in the Making— <i>Owen Seaman</i>	page 144
The Rescue— <i>R. H. S. Calver</i>	146
More Reprisals— <i>M. A. Lewis</i>	148
Our Beauty Column— <i>F. H. Deans</i>	151
Propaganda in the Balkans— <i>L. I. Crawford</i>	153
Bakerloonacy— <i>Desmond Carter</i>	156
An Error in Tactics— <i>C. W. Cundy</i>	157
Golden Promises— <i>A. G. Hashim</i>	160
The Last Straw— <i>A. A. Milne</i>	163
The Ballybun Soviet— <i>Max Drennan</i>	167
'Small Ads'— <i>G. G. Soloman</i>	169
Suzanne's Banking Account— <i>Stanley J. Fay</i>	172
The Actress— <i>E. Jenkins</i>	175
Presence of Mind— <i>M. A. Lewis</i>	176
Twenty Years On— <i>A. W. Bird</i>	179
How to Build a House— <i>A. C. Harwood</i>	180
Elizabeth Outwitted— <i>F. A. Kilpatrick</i>	182
Racing as a Business— <i>E. P. White</i>	186
The Passing of Andrew— <i>R. S. McLellan</i>	189
A Rural Dialogue— <i>Rex Colville</i>	192
Definitions from a Scots Dictionary— <i>R. Watson</i>	194
Out!— <i>Rex Colville</i>	196
The Ottoman— <i>Alan d'Egville</i>	198
Keeping Chickens— <i>A. Preston-Tewart</i>	201
The Inspiration— <i>B. W. Chandler</i>	203
The Programme— <i>R. T. Lee</i>	205
'The Green Jay'— <i>E. H. Jeffs</i>	209
The Dead Cat— <i>E. S. K. Robinson</i>	212
A Few Samples— <i>A. P. Herbert</i>	214
The Power of the Press— <i>R. F. White</i>	218
The Missing Monkeys— <i>Inglis Allen</i>	220

Contents

How <i>Not</i> to say Good-bye— <i>F. A. Kilpatrick</i>	page 224
Remarkable Experiences with a Medium— <i>Max Drennan</i>	226
A Somerset Mystery— <i>Ben Travers</i>	229
A Great Liar— <i>J. Fitzpatrick</i>	231
'Jamais'— <i>Gurney Slade</i>	232
Pilmonine— <i>F. A. Rice</i>	234
The Complaint of the Third-Class Passenger— <i>J. W. Pepper</i>	236
The Chinese Vases— <i>E. V. Lucas</i>	237
The Third Bathe— <i>E. V. Knox</i>	240
French Mastering— <i>L. B. Gullick</i>	243
Embroidery— <i>A. L. Polak</i>	246
The Two Lords of the Lost Island— <i>W. H. Gillman</i>	250
The Bottle's Progress— <i>E. V. Lucas</i>	252
Unskilled Labour— <i>T. Hodgkinson</i>	254
Help!— <i>E. J. Edgar</i>	255
Melodic Dress— <i>A. B. Cox</i>	258
A Press Colourman— <i>Moray Dalton</i>	260
Suburban Scenes— <i>A. P. Herbert</i>	261
A Guide to Short Story Writing— <i>A. B. Cox</i>	266
The Hammock Fallacy— <i>L. du Garde Peach</i>	269
That Flu— <i>Major Kendall</i>	273
A Guide for Settlers in New York City— <i>Berry Fleming</i>	274
Theatre Rhymes— <i>Guy Boas</i>	278
Fighting Through— <i>Ralph Wotherspoon</i>	279
Why I Bought a—Car— <i>E. V. Knox</i>	283
✓ The Horrors of Peace— <i>I. S. O. Playfair</i>	286
✓ A Mystery Fish— <i>Jan Struther</i>	288
The Right to Kill— <i>W. P. Lipscomb</i>	289
The American Tourist at Home— <i>Berry Fleming</i>	294
Diet for an Invalid— <i>J. W. Hawtrey</i>	297
Economies at Whitehall— <i>S. G. Marsh</i>	299

Contents

On a Presentation Cigar— <i>E. P. White</i>	page 301
How to Dock a Ship— <i>H. R. Hancox</i>	302
Lays of Learning— <i>Guy Boas</i>	305
The Pome Hawker— <i>E. P. White</i>	306
Sunbeam: A Tragedy— <i>R. P. Mountney</i>	309
Marcus, The Man-Eating Fish— <i>C. H. Bretherton</i>	313
Summer in Arcady— <i>L. du Garde Peach</i>	315
Simple Stories— <i>Archibald Marshall</i>	319, 465
Be a Little Man— <i>W. E. Richards</i>	321
The Escalator— <i>E. V. Knox</i>	323
✓ Sweethearts and Wives— <i>C. Fox-Smith</i>	325
The New Chivalry— <i>G. G. Soloman</i>	327
Winter Warfare— <i>I. S. O. Playfair</i>	329
Some Hounds— <i>E. E. Nott-Bower</i>	332
Somewhere in Var— <i>E. V. Knox</i>	333
Just the Reverse— <i>Michael Lawrence</i>	337
More Jackdaw in Georgia— <i>W. K. Seymour</i>	339
The Modern Transformation Scene— <i>E. R. Punshon</i>	340
A Prisoner of Tunisia— <i>Madame Chavanne</i>	344
The Chicken-Pox Sweepstake— <i>Inglis Allen</i>	348
The Trials of Topsy— <i>A. P. Herbert</i>	351
In Praise of the Tote— <i>Owen Seaman</i>	355
The Incident of the Ex-President— <i>C. L. M. Brown</i>	356
The Punter's Solace— <i>T. Hodgkinson</i>	359
Brains and the Golfer— <i>L. B. Gullick</i>	360
The Play-Repairers— <i>L. G. Landau</i>	363
Nothing in the Slot— <i>A. W. Bird</i>	365
'As You (Apparently) Like It'— <i>R. J. Yeatman</i>	369
Song of the Cat-Burglar's Daughter— <i>C. L. Graves</i>	372
Lord Chariot's Gaffe— <i>F. G. H. Salusbury</i>	373
Rhum Babaists— <i>W. K. Seymour</i>	376

Contents

A Wallet at his Back— <i>Timothy Eden</i>	page 382
The Thriller— <i>Richard Mallett</i>	385
Bus Conductors— <i>Rose Fyleman</i>	386
Putting Things Right— <i>R. F. White</i>	387
Double-Faced Conduct— <i>H. O. S. Wright</i>	390
People I Don't Like— <i>C. L. Graves</i>	392
First Aids for Last Nights— <i>Rachel Ferguson</i>	394
Our Legal Pantomime— <i>Rachel Ferguson</i>	396
Jane and Michael— <i>J. M. Symns</i>	401
The Plot Revealed— <i>G. F. Lamb</i>	401
At a Charity Dinner— <i>Owen Seaman</i>	403
Library Chairs— <i>Moray Dalton</i>	405
George's Lion— <i>J. S. Battle</i>	407
Daily Difficulties— <i>F. A. Kilpatrick</i>	410
If This Should Meet the Eye— <i>Alan Crowther</i>	412
The Wasp— <i>Major Kendall</i>	417
Those Perfect Children— <i>Dudley Clark</i>	419
Persia— <i>Walter Meade</i>	421
'Nouns of Assemblage'— <i>Gordon Phillips</i>	422
Our Conquerors— <i>E. V. Lucas</i>	423
A Red Indian Wedding— <i>R. B. Horsefield</i>	425
Maximum and Minimum— <i>E. V. Lucas</i>	427
More Stage News— <i>F. G. Cooper</i>	429
'Non-Legal Advice'— <i>L. G. Landau</i>	430
Our Locust Campaign— <i>C. S. Jarvis</i>	431
Misleading Cases— <i>A. P. Herbert</i>	434
'Gölferdämmerung'— <i>P. A. Hall</i>	438
Salutation to Sleuths— <i>E. V. Knox</i>	441
'Who Would be a Blood-Sport?'— <i>Eric Keown</i>	444
Counter-Claim— <i>P. A. Hall</i>	447
The Owner-Driver and the Magistrate— <i>A. J. Talbot</i>	449

Contents

Rome v. Tuscans— <i>P. A. Hall</i>	page 451
The Blue Bulb— <i>P. fforde</i>	454
Our Tudor Colony— <i>E. P. White</i>	455
A Guide-Book to Insomnia— <i>Rachel Ferguson</i>	459
Iced Polly— <i>T. R. Hamber</i>	462
The Gladiator— <i>T. R. Hamber</i>	469
Pounds, Proverbs and Pence— <i>Jan Struther</i>	472
Natural History Notes— <i>H. F. Ellis</i>	474
What is Man?— <i>Major Kendall</i>	477
An Honest Man— <i>Major Kendall</i>	479
'Speech, Speech!'— <i>A. A. Thomson</i>	480
The Honours List— <i>Duncan Campbell</i>	482
The Derby— <i>H. F. Ellis</i>	484
'By Any Name . . . '— <i>A. P. Herbert</i>	487
More from the Hawthorns— <i>J. B. Caswell</i>	490
The Beginner's Guide to the Organ— <i>P. A. Hall</i>	494
The Expert Tries It— <i>Philip A. Stalker</i>	496
The Sting in the Tail— <i>B. W. Machell</i>	498
And Now All This— <i>R. J. Yeatman, and W. C. Sellar</i>	500
Bathroom Hogs— <i>R. E. Clement-Brown</i>	504
Our Institute— <i>Mary Dunn</i>	507
The Influence of the Thriller— <i>Mary Dunn</i>	508
Getting the Drop on Him— <i>E. Heath-Jones</i>	512
Cheaper Currency— <i>T. R. Hamber</i>	513
Mixed Modes— <i>H. F. Ellis</i>	515
Songs of a Sub-Man— <i>Patrick Barrington</i>	519
In Search of Altitude— <i>J. Jefferson Farjeon</i>	520
A Spin on the Solent— <i>H. W. Metcalfe</i>	523
Remnants Half-Price— <i>E. Farjeon</i>	528
Some Useful Phrases— <i>P. Fforde</i>	531
Agonies of an Adolescent— <i>Joan de Fraine</i>	533

Contents

Soggs of a Sub-Bad— <i>Patrick Barrington</i>	page 535
Alfred of the Talkies— <i>Douglas Woodruff</i>	537
How to Run a Bassoon Factory— <i>Nigel Balchin</i>	541
King Takes Count— <i>Kenneth Rankin</i>	544
Lower Fourth Essays— <i>B. O. Byass</i>	546
As Others Hear Us— <i>E. M. Delafield</i>	547, 553
Restraint— <i>F. A. Kilpatrick</i>	549
The Pills— <i>D. H. Barber</i>	552
Lessons for Lowbrows— <i>B. E. Bower</i>	556
Letters to the Secretary of a Golf Club— <i>George C. Nash</i>	558
Club Dinner— <i>George C. Nash</i>	559
Diary of a Town-Dweller— <i>Eric Keown</i>	562
The Case of the Pursuit— <i>Richard Mallett</i>	566
Arrival at Port— <i>W. K. Ziegler</i>	568
Explaining to Elizabeth— <i>Annette Leake</i>	571
The Beginner's Guide to Ski-ing— <i>J. B. Emtage</i>	574
The Outlaw— <i>P. M. Learoyd</i>	576
Hautboys and Torches— <i>Nigel Balchin</i>	579
Scandinavia from Within— <i>Anthony Armstrong</i>	581
Little Fish— <i>H. F. Westron</i>	591
Point-to-Point— <i>Virginia Graham</i>	592
Very Mixed Doubles— <i>Gerard Bryant</i>	596
Reflections of a Man of Strict Honour on Being About to Eat his Hat— <i>Eric Keown</i>	599
Impossible Stories— <i>Virginia Graham</i>	602
Songs of Ignorance— <i>John C. Squire</i>	606
Business for Pleasure— <i>Nigel Balchin</i>	608
Sunk Without Trace— <i>Richard Mallett</i>	611
Our Office— <i>Angela Milne</i>	614
The 'Um-ming-Slooth— <i>Eric Keown</i>	617
Interview with Gaffer— <i>H. F. Ellis</i>	620

Contents

Mr. Porter Does the Filing— <i>Angela Milne</i>	page 623
The Leer of Père Junot— <i>W. Gladden</i>	626
The Bogchester Chronicles— <i>H. W. Metcalfe</i>	628
Miss Pellow— <i>R. C. Scriven</i>	632
The Hold-up— <i>S. G. Bett</i>	634
We Return from Manceuvres— <i>Anthony Armstrong</i>	638
'Little Fleas have Lesser Fleas . . . '— <i>Nigel Balchin</i>	643
The Poet Under Orders— <i>Cyril G. Taylor</i>	646
The Rush Life Goes On— <i>E. M. Delafield</i>	648
Studies in International Amity— <i>H. F. Ellis</i>	651
The 'Bar Mineiro'— <i>T. R. Hamber</i>	653
The Caraways at Breakfast— <i>A. K. Milne</i>	656

THE YEAR'S PROSPECTS

Although you are still dating your letters '1910', the fact remains that we have slipped once again into a New Year. The change occurred (so remorseless is the flight of time) on the stroke of midnight last Saturday, at a moment when you were round the wassail-bowl, and was duly noted by the lynx-eyed Press. I propose now, if you are awake, to discuss with you the coming events, as far as they can be forecasted, of 1911.

ADVERTISEMENTS

Most of the advertisements of the year 1911 will be inspired by Cambridge University. For this reason a Chair of Literature has recently been endowed at the famous seat of learning, the first appointment to it being that of Mr. Hooper. Mr. Hooper's style is, if anything, more mellow even than it was in 1903, and it is expected that with the present year his intellectual powers will reach the extreme height of their expression. His great Scholarship scheme will be announced by the University during 1911. But you should order your set *now*.

BUDGETS

There will be one of these.

CORONATIONS

There will be one of these, too. The actual affair will take less than a day, but for weeks and weeks beforehand you will have to read Coronation odes and Coronation articles. You may as well begin at once. *Mr. Punch's* historical pamphlet, containing an account of the coronation of every sovereign from Harold Hardshanks to the present May-Queen of Cricklewood, will be out tomorrow.

The Year's Prospects

DRAMA

Many notable additions to dramatic literature will be made in 1911. Several entirely new plays will be performed, whose plots hinge upon the fact that the sinister Mrs. Dufray is attempting to blackmail John Sterne by means of a packet of letters which he had written to her in a moment of mistaken enthusiasm. Luckily John gets a telegram to say that she has died suddenly on her way to Dover. In the world of musical comedy the rich and beautiful Angela will change places with her maid, thereby evading several unwelcome proposals.

ELECTIONS

There will be *none* of these. This is a promise. If by any extraordinary chance there should be one, come to the office and ask for your money back. You won't get it, but we shall be glad to see you. Note the missionary-box on the left-hand side of the door as you pass out.

FRENCH

A lot of French will be spoken in 1911. *Hors (concours and d'œuvre) entre nous, jeu d'esprit, Jupiter Pluvius, eureka* and *ben trovato* will be among the most popular remarks of the day. *Omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulci*, or something like that, will be the 1911 catch-phrase at the music-halls.

GEORGE (LLOYD)

I had hoped to get through without referring to this, but I feel that it would be wrong to pretend that there will be no mention of him in the 1911 papers. His name is *bound* to crop up. Look out for it and see if you can spot it before your friend does.

HIATUS

There is going to be a hiatus now, until we get to L. It is obvious that I cannot mention all the wonderful things which are going to take place in the New Year, and in any case there's no prospect of anything very exciting in the I or J line happening in 1911.

The Year's Prospects

KORONATION

This is another way of spelling Coronation. I only just want to remind you that this is the year for it.

LORDS (OLD)

It will be a memorable year for the House of Lords. The great battle of 1911 will take its place in the history books of the future with Hastings and Waterloo. The broken square of Newtons, the final rally of the De La Warr Die-hards, the mad charge of the Death-or-Glory Midletons to the war-cry, 'A Saye and Sele!'—these will be subjects for the battle pictures of to-morrow.

LORDS (NEW)

But first there will have to be lots and lots and lots of these—perhaps.

MARQUESESSES

Even two or three brace of these. They might just possibly ask you or me! It is a solemn thought.

NOEL

It seems too bad to remind you that we shall be hearing all about this gentleman again before the year is over. He will turn up in 1911 all right, depend upon it. This won't exactly be a notable feature of the year, but there will be a good deal of talk about it later on.

PARENTHESIS

(I ought to have said before that Coronations are *de rigueur* this year.)

REBELLIONS

The date of the Rebellion in Ulster has not definitely been settled yet; but due notice will be sent to all the papers in time for the early sporting editions.

The Year's Prospects

STORY (SENSATIONAL, OF WEST END CLUB)

With any luck there will be about three of these during the year—one from Soho, and one from Hammersmith, and one from Notting Hill.

TUBES

Tubes will enter upon an entirely new era. In future no smoking will be allowed in the lifts, and the attendants will see to it that everybody is standing clear of the gates. The lift will then descend, and you will be in time to see the tail lights of one of those jolly little trains.

WEATHER

There will be much too much of this in 1911. *Much* too much. However, we may get a fine Sunday towards the end of July or August.

X.Y.Z. (OR RATHER, N.B.)

It has been decided that there shall be a Coronation this year. Don't go getting the date wrong—1911.

A. A. M.

The Coronation Ceremony, by the way, promises to be the most successful function of the year. In addition to a host of notabilities, the King and Queen have promised to be present. (7.6.11.)

LITTLE PLAYS FOR AMATEURS

'THE LOST HEIRESS'

The Scene is laid outside a village inn in that county of curious dialects, Loamshire. The inn is easily indicated by a round table bearing two mugs of liquid, while a fallen log emphasises the rural nature of the scene. GAFFER JARGE and GAFFER WILLYUM are seated at the table,

Little Plays for Amateurs

surrounded by a fringe of whisker, JARGE being slightly more of a gaffer than WILLYUM.

JARGE. *(who missed his dinner through nervousness and has been ordered to sustain himself with soup—as he puts down the steaming mug.)* Eh, bor, but this be rare beer. So it be.

WILLYUM. *(who had too much dinner and is now draining his sanatorium.)* You be right, Gaffer Jarge. Her be main rare beer. *(He feels up his sleeve, but thinking better of it wipes his mouth with the back of his hand.)* Main rare beer, so her be. *(Gagging)* Zure-lie.

JARGE. Did I ever tell 'ee, bor, about t' new squoire o' these parts—him wot cum hum yesterday from furren parts? Gaffer Henry wor a-telling me.

WILLYUM. *(privately bored.)* Thee didst tell 'un, lad, sartain sure thee didst. And Gaffer Henry, he didst tell 'un too. But tell 'un again. It du me good to hear 'un, zo it du. Zure-lie.

JARGE. A rackun it be a main queer tale, queerer nor any them writing chaps tell about. It wor like this. *(Dropping into English, in his hurry to get his long speech over before he forgets it.)* The old Squire had a daughter who disappeared when she was three weeks old, eighteen years ago. It was always thought she was stolen by somebody, and the Squire would have it that she was still alive. When he died a year ago he left the estate and all his money to a distant cousin in Australia, with the condition that if he did not discover the missing baby within twelve months everything was to go to the hospitals. *(Remembering his smock and whiskers with a start.)* And here du be the last day, zo it be, and t' Squoire's daughter, her ain't found.

WILLYUM. *(puffing at a new and empty clay pipe.)* Zure-lie. *(JARGE, a trifle jealous of WILLYUM's gag, pulls out a similar pipe, but smokes it with the bowl upside down to show his independence.)* T' Squire's darter *(JARGE frowns)*, her bain't *(JARGE wishes he had thought of 'bain't')—her*

Little Plays for Amateurs

bain't found. (*There is a dramatic pause, only broken by the prompter.*) Her ud be little Rachel's age now, bor?

JARGE. (*reflectively.*) Ay, ay. A main queer lass little Rachel be. Her bain't like one of us.

WILLYUM. Her do be that fond of zoap and water. (*Laughter.*)

JARGE. (*leaving nothing to chance.*) Happens she might be a real grand lady by birth, bor.

Enter RACHEL, beautifully dressed in the sort of costume in which one would go to a fancy-dress ball as a village maiden.

RACHEL. (*in the most expensive accent.*) Now, Uncle George (*shaking a finger at him*), didn't you promise me you'd go straight home? It would serve you right if I never tied your tie for you again. (*She smiles brightly at him.*)

JARGE. (*slapping his thigh in ecstasy.*) Eh, lass! yer du keep us old uns in order. (*He bursts into a falsetto chuckle, loses the note, blushes and buries his head in his mug.*)

WILLYUM. (*rising.*) Us best be gettin' down along, Jarge, a rackun.

JARGE. Ay, bor, time us chaps was moving. Don't 'e be long, lass.

(Exeunt, limping heavily.)

RACHEL. (*sitting down on the log.*) Dear old men! How I love them all in this village! I have known it all my life. How strange it is that I have never had a father or mother. Sometimes I seem to remember a life different to this—a life in fine houses and spacious parks, among beautifully dressed people (*which is surprising seeing that she was only three weeks old at the time; but the audience must be given a hint of the plot*), and then it all fades away again. (*She looks fixedly into space.*)

Enter HUGH FITZHUGH, Squire.

FITZHUGH. (*standing behind RACHEL, but missing her somehow.*) Did ever man come into stranger inheritance? A wanderer in Central Australia, I hear unexpectedly of my cousin's death through an advertisement in an old copy of a Sunday newspaper. I hasten home—too late

Little Plays for Amateurs

to soothe his dying hours; too late indeed to enjoy my good fortune for more than one short day. To-morrow I must give up all to the hospitals, unless by some stroke of Fate this missing girl turns up. (*Impatiently.*) Pshaw! She is dead. (*Suddenly he notices RACHEL.*) By Heaven, a pretty girl in this out-of-the-way village! (*He walks round her.*) Gad, she is lovely! Hugh, my boy, you are in luck. (*He takes off his hat.*) Good evening, my dear!

RACHEL. (*with a start.*) Good evening.

FITZHUGH. (*aside.*) She is adorable. She can be no common village wench. (*Aloud.*) Do you live here, my girl?

RACHEL. Yes, I have always lived here. (*Aside.*) How handsome he is. Down, fluttering heart.

FITZHUGH. (*sitting on the log beside her.*) And who is the lucky village lad who is privileged to woo such beauty?

RACHEL. I have no lover, Sir.

FITZHUGH. (*taking her hand.*) Can Hodge be so blind?

RACHEL. (*innocently.*) Are you making love to me?

FITZHUGH. Upon my word I—— (*He gets up from the log, which is not really comfortable.*) What is your name?

RACHEL. Rachel. (*She rises.*)

FITZHUGH. It is the most beautiful name in the world. Rachel, will you be my wife?

RACHEL. But we have known each other such a short time!

FITZHUGH. (*lying bravely.*) We have known each other for ever.

RACHEL. And you are a rich gentleman, while I——

FITZHUGH. A gentleman, I hope, but rich—no. To-morrow I shall be a beggar, No, not a beggar if I have your love, Rachel.

RACHEL. (*making a lucky shot at his name.*) Hugh! (*They embrace.*)

FITZHUGH. Let us plight our troth here. See I give you my ring!

RACHEL. And I give you mine.

(*She takes one from the end of a chain which is round her neck, and puts it on his finger. FITZHUGH looks at it and staggers back.*)

Little Plays for Amateurs

FITZHUGH. Heavens! They are the same ring! (*In great excitement.*) Child, child, who are you? How came you by the crest of the Fitzhughs?

RACHEL. Ah, who am I? I never had any parents. When they found me they found that ring on me, and I have kept it ever since!

FITZHUGH. Let me look at you! It must be! The Squire's missing daughter!

GAFFERS JARGE and WILLYUM, *having entered unobserved at the back some time ago, have been putting in a lot of heavy by-play until wanted.*)

JARGE. (*at last.*) Lor' bless 'ee, Willyum, if it bain't Squire a-kissin' our Rachel!

WILLYUM. So it du be. Here du be goings-on! What will t'passon say?

JARGE. (*struck with an idea.*) Zay, bor, don't 'ee zee a zort o' loikeness atween t' maid and t'Squire?

WILLYUM. Jarge, if you bain't right, lad. Happen she do have t' same nose!

(*Hearing something, FITZHUGH and RACHEL turn round.*)

FITZHUGH. Ah, my men! I'm your new Squire. Do you know who this is?

WILLYUM. Why, her du be our Rachel.

FITZHUGH. On the contrary, allow me to introduce you to Miss Fitzhugh, daughter of the late Squire!

JARGE. Well this du be a day! To think of our Rachel now!

FITZHUGH. *My* Rachel now.

RACHEL. (*who, it is to be hoped, has been amusing herself somehow since her last speech.*) Your Rachel always!

CURTAIN

A. A. M.

Stories for Uncles

STORIES FOR UNCLES

(Being Extracts from the MSS. of a Six-Year Niece)

THE BATTLE OF PINKRE

I dedcate these stories to my afecshnate uncle with love from Alice he is older than me but I will be as old as him sumday and he will then kno wot care I took of him now the battle that you are just going to read which is the battle of Pinkre between the French and the English was a very firce battle, the English arme had 5403th men and the French arme had 8924th but the French King was in an awful state.

But I must first tell you about a boy whose name was James Frederick this boy was the son of the last King of England who had not been a properly King but had been an egsile and had died there leaving his son swiving but this son did not kno he was a King he only spected it he was not James the first or James the second his royl name was James the nothing and he lived by hissself in a cottage.

One morning James got up erly before brekfus and walked up a hill what he new and on the top of the hill he found a palis what he didnt kno so he said to hissself sumbody's put up this palis I must go in and see about it so he went into a mense salune. There was a lether bag on a table and when James touched it it broke open and a lot of gold rushed out Haha said James stufing the gold into his pockets Haha I will bie canon balls with this but at this moment a tal dark man with a bierd burst into the room when the boy James sor the man he new he must make an escuse so he looked at the man and said If you plees Sir your chimnies want sweeping but the man looked at him and said Well and your nose wants wiping. The man was the French King and after this they hated one another.

Now I will get back to the battle by this time James had cum to the throne and the French King's name was Charles. The foot soldiers had thire guns and the Kings had thire sords and helmets and thire were korprils with flags. The French King was in grate trouble becas he had just had a little baby girl and had noone to look after it so he could not do much in fighting. One day when the little French girl was ten years old and she was playing in the

Stories for Uncles

garden a soldier came and said to her Were is the King. Why she said. Becas the English are coming. What the English are coming, go and gather up the arme quick quick. I can't do it said the soldier runing at the same time I can't do it becas thire trampling down the corn oh were is the King. The little girl bagen to cry oh dear oh dear were can he be.

Left right Left right.

What is that she said and she looked round and she sor cuming towards her the hole English arme.

Oh do not hurt me she cried, nelying down at Jameses feet and he did not take any notise of her but marched on throu the gates. But soon she herd James cry out We have one the battle and King Charles is ded.

The little girl did not mind very much she was to yung and next summer she was marred to the brave King of England and they had ten boys and two girls and often talked of the battle of Pinkre were they met the first time. Pinkre is a sitty in France.

R. C. L.

MILITARY INTELLIGENCE

(Answers to Correspondents)

Malta. It is no use appealing to us to champion you. The fact that you kept the regiment one hour and a half on parade is deplorable. Your excuse that the men were precious bad at 'marching past' and that you were on the eve of the G.O.C.'s annual inspection will not lessen the gravity of the offence in the eyes of the 'Court'. It will, however, be in your favour that you allowed the canteen to be open for two hours extra after the men came off parade.

Last Joined (Chatham). An eye-glass is worn occasionally by very young and inexperienced officers; but we do not advise you to use one when you join the battalion.

'Sub', Plymouth. Indeed you are mistaken. A board of officers to condemn two 'part worn' great coats is as important a military requirement as a court-martial for murder. The fact that your cab-

Military Intelligence

fare from Trigantal cost the Government 18/6, and that the value of the coats totalled 4/8 $\frac{3}{4}$, would *not* impress the House.

Field Officer, R.A. (Abroad). The following list may help you. No wonder you are perplexed to know when to wear your hats:—

Forage cap (gold-laced). *Military use:* Going to mess on guest nights. *Home use:* In the garden and to amuse the children.

Field-service cap (Blue). *Military use:* Going to mess on rainy nights. *Home use:* At fancy balls.

Brown 'Kitchener' helmet. *Military use:* Ordinary parades. *Home use:* At the photographer's—most becoming.

Brown slouch hat. *Military use:* On manœuvres. *Home use:* To frighten the children when naughty.

Blue cap, with peak. *Military use:* With the frock-coat when visiting ships, etc., etc. *Home use:* At Salvation Army meetings.

White helmet, with fittings. *Military use:* On church parade and at D.C.M.'s. *Home use:* To interview the cook on Sunday morning.

Khaki field-service cap. *Military use:* When visiting sick in hospital, and can be worn at night when turning out the main guard. (N.B.—It is not advisable on clear nights as you may be seen by higher authorities.) *Home use:* May be used as a tea cosy or a mat for vegetable-dishes.

Straw hat pugaree and badge. *Military use:* When it is 92 deg. in the shade. *Home use:* This hat with a little pale blue ribbon, a few forget-me-nots, and slightly tilted on the left side, will make a pretty summer hat for Madam.

Khaki peaked cap, with bronze badge. *Military use:* Anywhere and at any time. *Home use:* Presented to the garrison church it makes a neat 'collection bag' when held by the peak.

P. a B.

General Caneva states that it is not the intention of the Italian troops to advance into the interior of Tripoli till the Spring. Their present operations are, we suppose, merely the crouch before the spring. (22.11.11.)

The Last Wopse of Summer

THE LAST WOPSE OF SUMMER

Taking usual morning buzz round village with Charles Algernon, it suddenly occurs to me that he and I are the sole survivors of our race. When Providence sees fit to call us to itself, there won't be a single wopse left in entire neighbourhood!

Linger with Charles Algernon outside Grocer's. Depressed by sight of corpses, all relations or dear friends, piled a foot deep inside window panes. 'And to think', says Charles Algernon, 'that, with only a little more self-restraint, every one of those fine fellows might be with us yet!'

True enough—but Charles Algernon hardly the insect to say so, never having been exposed to *real* temptation. If he'd ever come across it—say in the form of a beer or treacle-jar—would have fallen in to a dead certainty. Well-meaning wopse, in his way, but weak. Have sent him on to scout.

He returns with report of excellent opening at house down next street. Accompany him to window, and find I've been there before. Occupier a peevish old person, who flaps about him with napkin. Doesn't do much execution with that—but rather nippy with butter-knife. I know, because only a fortnight since he chopped a favourite uncle and two second cousins in halves before my very eyes. . . . Stop on sill, and let Charles Algernon go in first. . . . According to him, everything as it should be; table laid for breakfast, nice fire, nobody about. . . . Think I may venture in. Any strawberry jam going? no jam, according to Charles Algernon, only marmalade. Tut-tut! how *can* people be so inconsiderate? Factory marmalade never *does* agree with me. Of course, if it's home-made . . . Charles Algernon, already inside cut-glass bowl, declares it *is* home-made—and most luscious. Not sure that I'm in the mood for marmalade this morning. Shall sit on edge of bowl and see how Charles Algernon gets on. Surface strikes me as looking a little tricky. 'Safe enough,' he assures me, 'so long as you keep on the peel.' Perhaps, after all, just a taste. Few things more wholesome than genuine home-made marmalade—always provided you don't over-eat yourself. Afraid that's just what Charles Algernon's doing—his face is a perfect mask

The Last Wopse of Summer

of marmalade already! Feel it my duty to warn him against excess. He seems offended; says I needn't be afraid of *him*, as he knows perfectly well where to stop. He may—but the syrup is hardly the safest part to stop in. He tells me it's far the sweetest, and I've no idea how delicious it is, and goes on wallowing. Won't look at him—can't bear to see *any* wopse making such a beast of himself. . . . This peel is certainly a little too acid. Syrup might act as a corrector. Anyway, *one* sip can't hurt me. . . . Charles Algernon's right about its being sweet. *Quite* excellent! Luckily, unlike some wopses, *I* know when I've had enough. . . . Remind Charles Algernon that we'd better be going. He begs me to wait for just another minute—he'll be out directly. Will give him a little longer—may as well have one more go at the syrup. . . . That last mouthful not so good—cloying, somehow. If Charles Algernon won't come out, I shall simply go *without* him, that's all!

He assures me he would be only too glad to get out, if he could, but he can't. There! I *told* him how it would be—but he wouldn't listen—and now, oh, Charles Algernon! that *you* should have come to such an end as this! . . . Well, *I* can do nothing for him, except leave him to his fate. . . .

Very odd—but I find it's more of an effort to get away than I expected. Can't feel my feet in this confounded syrup. This will be a lesson to me. Must give up marmalade after this!

Still floundering; horrid doubt whether marmalade will give *me* up. Gather from Charles Algernon's *antennæ*—all I can see of him—that he is feebly amused. Heartless! . . .

It's all over with the pair of us—unless. . . . Why *not*? No sense in *both* of us losing our lives—and such valuable lives! . . . If I can only struggle up to Charles Algernon. . . . I have. 'Keep cool, old fellow, leave everything to me. Here, I *say*! What are you doing! Don't be an *ass*, dear old chap! You're shoving me under! . . .'

Simply no words to express my opinion of Charles Algernon's conduct. Instead of allowing me to clamber over him, he's deliberately got on top of *me*! He is still there, callously engaged in cleaning his wings. As soon as they are serviceable again, he flies to edge of bowl, from which he addresses me. 'Augustus Henry,'

The Last Wopse of Summer

he is saying, his *antennæ* quivering with real or assumed emotion, 'you have saved my life by an act of heroic self-sacrifice which I shall always remember with gratitude. May that thought console you! And now, farewell!'

I suppose I must let it go at that. All the same, it is annoying to think that it should be Charles Algernon who will now be the Last of the Wopses!

F. A. G.

THE ANTIQUE CLOCK

I have a deep-rooted horror of auctioneers, at least in their public capacity. Of their private life I cannot speak with any authority, but I have a confirmed belief that when the head of the family returns from the heat of the day and prepares to ladle out the soup his face will suddenly brighten, and in a great voice, flourishing the spoon the while, he will remark, 'Ladies and gents, what offers?' only to subside at a glance from his wife into a gloomy silence.

Sometimes I have fluttered for a few brief moments on the fringe of the bidders, but never without instantly catching the auctioneer's eye. Possibly he mistakes my careworn expression for genuine concern regarding the priceless article in his hand. 'George,' he invariably bawls to his assistant, 'show the fish-forks and knives complete to the stout party in the top 'at.' I hope for the best, but can see no other top hat in my proximity. George pushes his way through the interested spectators, and I extract a fork without enthusiasm. There is an awkward pause.

'Well, sir?' cries the auctioneer with husky expectation.

'Two shillings,' I murmur with sullen despair, and a cold shiver passes over me in case I am within reasonable reach of that alarming armoury.

The auctioneer leans forward, assuming a temporary deafness.

'Did I 'ear the gentleman aright, George?' he inquires, adding irony to righteous indignation. 'Did I 'ear 'im say "two bob" for that 'andsome set of cutlery, hall 'all-marked? Not two bob, George?' He has the look of a man prepared for a strong denial.

The Antique Clock

I nod feverishly. The auctioneer shakes his head with profound emotion and looks about for sympathy. I begin to feel an unscrupulous fellow. The spectators survey me with mild curiosity.

'George,' continues the auctioneer firmly, 'bring the case back. I was mistaken, George. The gent thinks, because he sports a top 'at, 'e can 'ave 'is little joke. Bit of a wag, George—comes in to waste our time and the time of ladies and gentlemen 'oo want to do business——'

He says much else, but I have reached the door by that time and gained the sanctuary of the street.

It was after dinner Evelyn broached the subject. There is an absence of fair play in feminine tactics.

'He's *such* a nice man,' she said musingly.

'Nice?—an auctioneer? Oh, come, my dear! you're facetious.'" I smiled in a superior fashion.

'But his clocks are outrageously cheap,' she added, warming to the subject. 'Of course one does not like taking advantage of the man, but it's a chance in a thousand. Such beautiful clocks with carved doddle-dabbles on the face and——'

'But we have a clock—lots of clocks. Why create a greater disturbance and rivalry than at present?'

Evelyn sighed. 'Don't be silly, dear. We'll just run down tomorrow, and if we're first when the shop opens at nine we'll pick up the bargain of our lives.'

It is hopeless arguing with her when she talks like that.

It was striking nine when we entered the shop. The auctioneer seemed a little surprised when we bustled in.

After a few moments' pause, however, he stepped behind his table and coughed politely just to put us at our ease and to indicate that the arena was cleared.

'I think you said the antique clock, madam?' he remarked briskly. 'The very last—a treasure—a remarkably fine timepiece, eighteenth-century style with double gongs, three strikes, alarm and bevelled fingers.'

He recited the full category of its features and accomplishments with rare fluency.

The Antique Clock

'Bevelled fingers are out of date,' I said brightly, in case he thought we were impressed, which we were.

Even Evelyn looked at me with pity.

'So is the clock, Sir,' responded the auctioneer with gentle courtesy.

There are moments when a retort seems beyond the range of reason. I wished I had been less ambitious and asked where the cuckoo was. That would have taken the wind out of his sails. He couldn't have known we already have two clocks which with varying strikes deliver some twenty triumphant cuckoos every midnight.

We turned again to business.

'Now, Madam,' resumed the auctioneer, 'as there appears to be no competition——'

'I beg your pardon,' broke in a voice from a wardrobe, 'but I want that clock.'

'It is no real use to a wardrobe,' I said firmly.

But at that moment a stout, distinguished lady appeared round the corner and eyed us in a melancholy fashion.

Evelyn started.

'Be calm,' I whispered, fearing she would fell her with the family umbrella.

'Come, come, Madam,' said the auctioneer with polite remonstrance, addressed to the new-comer; 'there is a selection of other articles very serviceable and inexpensive. This lady particularly desires the clock; it is the very last.' His conclusion was a fine touch of pathos, but hardly diplomatic.

'I want the clock,' repeated the distinguished lady with heavy determination.

The auctioneer shrugged his shoulders. There was evidently nothing more to be said. But the glance he cast in our direction clearly showed where his sympathy lay.

'In that case', he continued, 'it must go to the highest bidder. What shall we say for a start? I'm sure I need not tell you of the exceptional quality of the article——'

'Spare us that,' I cried. He looked at me sourly and waited.

There was a ghastly silence; I mopped my brow.

The Antique Clock

'Five shillings,' said Evelyn suddenly.

'Ten,' from the stout lady.

'Twelve,' snapped Evelyn, the light of battle in her eye.

'Fourteen,' added the other competitor monotonously.

Evelyn was startled. She glanced nervously at me. I stared fixedly at the auctioneer's preposterous cravat. I noted that his foxhead pin had lost an eye.

'Sixteen,' cried Evelyn, trembling with suppressed fury.

'Pound!' thundered the stout distinguished lady, like a gale.

'Thirty shillings with the key,' I roared, flushed with the evil ardour of competition.

'Forty,' from the stout lady.

I nudged Evelyn casually to indicate the psychological moment had arrived.

'There's something somewhere by somebody about a tide in the affairs of men,' I began helpfully, but was cut short, for Evelyn, with an heroic effort to appear unconcerned and in accents simulating passionless determination, broke silence. 'Forty-five,' she said like a person with a cold, and clutched my arm in a fevered grasp.

There was a painful silence.

The auctioneer wore a smile indicative of nothing at all.

The stranger had succumbed.

We tried to look sympathetic as we retired with the antique clock concealed in brown paper, and the accompanying cannon-ball (which during business hours careered in mid-air on a piece of string) in my pocket.

Evelyn, dear child, even went up to the stout lady and murmured she was so sorry, but she wanted it *so* badly to match the tea-set or something else quite improbable, while the stout lady smiled graciously and without question, like a true sportswoman.

We had a little dinner and theatre just to celebrate the event. I reckoned out the total cost of the transaction afterwards. Counting the festivities it was in the region of three pounds ten.

I remembered that more acutely next day. For I happened to pass the shop at eight-thirty, on my way to the office, and as a

The Antique Clock

criminal is said to linger about the precincts of his crime I peered in for a moment at the door.

I admit I was somewhat startled to see a row of half a dozen antique clocks along the wall, all assuredly the last. But what shocked me even more was the sight of the stout lady, no longer distinguished, but wearing an apron and much occupied in the final stages of dusting the wardrobe.

But, as some clever person has said, there are things which even the best of us do not tell our wives.

F. W.

MOTORIETIES

CORRESPONDENCE

(With acknowledgments to 'The Autocar')

(No. 93,428.) 'Nervous', in his letter (No. 89,601), says that on each of the two occasions when he has run over dogs he suffered severely from shock. May I say that I too used to experience such shocks and once strained my back axle in this way; but since fitting Bulger's shock-absorbers I have been able to take the largest dogs, and even sheep, at high speeds without inconvenience.

"BROOKLANDS."

(No. 93,429.) 'Veritas' in his last letter wilfully distorted what I said, and in so doing perjured himself. I did *not* say that the spring of the A.F.X. valve got 'tired', I said it became 'fatigued'. Perhaps 'Veritas' thinks that the words mean the same. If so, I am sorry for him, as his education or his mental equipment must be sadly lacking. If 'Veritas' will come to Ballyslughter I will prove my contention up to the hilt; and if, as I suppose, he is not allowed to travel alone, he may bring his attendant with him. 'Veritas' should be careful not to use the term 'blithering ignoramus', as it exactly describes himself.

TRUTH.

(Our readers will be glad to hear what 'Veritas' has to say in reply to the above, as this valve is of absorbing interest to all motorists just now.—Ed.)

Motorieties

(No. 93,430.) I was interested to read 'Gourmet's' letter (No. 72,052), and beg to place my experience at the disposal of your readers. 'Gourmet' will find that the 'flat' taste he complains of, and difficulty in making the water boil, will disappear if he takes my advice, as I always get excellent results, viz.: a large brew of tea of the finest flavour. First, then, he must empty the Radiator. It stands to reason that water which has perhaps been circulating round the engine for weeks cannot be *relied* on to produce tea of really good flavour. When emptied it is a good plan to run a gallon or two of *clean* water through the radiator and then fill up with fresh well or, preferably, *spring* water. Open the throttle full, shut off the air, disconnect the fan, put the spark back to its farthest, start the engine and boil up. This takes me with my 40 h.p. 'Mogul' exactly seventeen seconds. When the water boils put the tea into the radiator enclosed in a sausage-shaped muslin bag with string attached, so that it may be withdrawn when infusion is completed. This is a much better plan than allowing the loose tea leaves to circulate, as they are apt to clog the draw-off cock and have then to be picked out with a hat-pin or, better, a crochet-hook, a tedious business at best. I may mention that while tea-making is in progress excellent buttered toast may be made against the exhaust, which is, of course, red hot, or a cutlet grilled to perfection.

TEMPERANCE.

(No. 93,431.) Teddy's suggestion (letter No. 85,611) that all roads where they enter and leave villages should have notices slung across from house to house stating the name of the place, *quite* takes the banana. The arrangement might be improved, however, by making the letters two feet high, as a twelve-inch letter is sometimes unreadable at high speeds. The name, too, should be printed in luminous paint (except where electric illuminations are possible), and on *both* sides of the board, as one frequently forgets the name of a place while buying petrol, etc., and likes to be reminded on leaving it. As proof how necessary some such device has become I may say that only last week I ran through York under the impression it was Selby, which place I had not noticed on the road

Motorieties

at all; and a pal of mine lately mistook Blackburn for Rochdale, Rochdale for Bolton, and Bolton for Wigan, owing to a policeman telling him that Bradford was Leeds. UNDERGRADUATE.

(No. 93, 432.) Last week I suffered precisely the same misfortune as that endured two years since by a dear friend of mine, now, I regret to say, slowly recovering from an illness with exemplary patience. I was travelling from Birmingham to Oxford in the night-time, and going through Winterbath, where the road turns about, I must have suffered some confusion of mind (although I was not aware of it at the time), for an hour later I found myself entering Birmingham again. Cannot the place be pulled down? If not, I greatly fear that many other motorists will be victimised in the same way, alas!

RECTOR.

B. C.

A Pittsburg millionaire aged seventy-five has just married a beautiful young girl of nineteen and several newspapers have referred to the event as a 'Romance'. (28.2.12).

'THE MAN IN THE STALLS'

(*An Appreciation*)

*The row was front, the place was Pit,
And in the centre seat of it
It was my privilege to sit.*

*And, sitting there, I sat behind
A Stallite of the larger kind,
Who, having previously dined,*

*Arrived some twenty minutes late,
For reasons which he did not wait
A more convenient time to state.*

'The Man in the Stalls'

*He did not drop into his seat
At once, but stood upon his feet
And looked about for friends to greet.*

*And, when he settled down at last,
I caught the judgment which he passed
On every member of the cast,*

*And overheard his loud regret
That time had not arrived, as yet,
To go and smoke a cigarette.*

*When he could stand the strain no more,
He made his preparations for
Departing by an early door.*

*Then, daring much but much afraid,
I tapped his restless shoulder-blade.
This is the little speech I made:—*

*'To you, whom theatres clearly pall,
The Pit is much obliged, O Stall,
For bothering to come at all.*

*'There is about your splendid back,
That now familiar stretch of black,
A movement which the others lack.*

*'Your comings in, your goings out
Were things to watch and think about,
Which we could ill have done without.*

*'Your fluent talk, your frequent jest,
Your inner thoughts, so well expressed,
Have been of endless interest.*

'The Man in the Stalls'

*'We shall return to-morrow night;
But, though to us it will be quite
A dismal thing to miss the sight*

*'And sound of you, we shan't complain,
So do not give yourself the pain
Of worrying to come again.*

*'For, please, to-morrow, if we may,
We'd like to see and hear the play.'*

F. O. L.

HOW TO BUY THINGS

(With other relevant advice)

GOLDFISH

When you go to buy goldfish be sure to take some water with you. They are delicate creatures, and seldom thrive in brown paper, however carefully packed, or the trousers pocket. Goldfish have never been known to attack a human being, and they make capital pets. To the up-to-date conjurer they are indispensable. Never buy goldfish at an immature age; the simple life of an aquarium is not suited to the *jeunesse dorée*. A very good way to test the fish is to put some acid on it; if it turns black, don't buy it. It is probably a Birmingham fish. At the present rate of exchange, goldfish cost about threepence each, but a big European war would inevitably send the price up. The cost of breadcrumbs must also be considered by the careful buyer. Never buy goldfish before they have learnt to swim, or you will be greatly disappointed. It is quite easy to distinguish the non-swimmers, because they float on their backs on the surface of the water, and open and shut their mouths. A tin of sardines would give more pleasure than a bowlful of these incompetent wasters. Remember that goldfish require amusement. If your purchases show signs of boredom, cheer them up by placing a pebble or two in the bowl; this will give them something to think about. There is nothing like a pebble to brighten things up. At the present time the Metro-

How to Buy Things

politan Water Board make no extra charge where goldfish are kept, though how long this generous policy will continue the writer is unable to say.

A FOUNTAIN-PEN

No one need be without a fountain-pen. They are as common as coal circulars and wrestling champions. The guinea kinds are sold at ninepence, and so in proportion. To test pen, fill it with ink and jerk it violently in direction of shop-walker's waistcoat. Any kind of ink will do. If he continues to solicit your custom you may conclude that the pen is a good one.

The great advantage of fountain-pens over other pens is that you can carry them about with you in your waistcoat pocket, or indeed anywhere about your person. You can take them to bed with you. At the dentist's you can say to yourself, 'I am all right *this* time! I have my fountain-pen with me!' Nothing matters to the man who has a pen. And they are so handy. All you want is a case for the pen, a box, a dip, a squirt thing, a pair of pliers, some special ink and—there you are! These will do to go on with, but a complete outfit should include blotting paper, ink eraser, and some salts of lemon. Our grandfathers did not have fountain-pens, poor things. But then they were so terribly behind the times.

A SIDEBOARD

A very good way to buy a sideboard is to get it on the hire-purchase system. You pay the first instalment on it, and then the man writes to you for the others. If he does not write, he calls. If he forgets to write or call for six years, the sideboard is yours. Many young couples start in this way. The best-known styles of sideboards are Byzantine, Perpendicular, Fumed Oak and Tottenham Court Road—Buses and Tubes to all parts. Then there are the sales, which are always worth attending. They are generally conducted by Scotchmen, and take place in noblemen's mansions. All you have to do is to nod your head, pay over the money, and the sideboard is yours. When you get it home and examine it at your leisure, it will be the surprise of your life. There are some

How to Buy Things

sideboards that you can only open in dry weather; if it is wet, the drawers stick; so you have a handy article of furniture and a weather guide all in one. It is very convenient. When buying a sideboard, be careful to live in a flat that is big enough to hold it. The writer knew a man who had to change his flat twice before he could get the marmalade out of the sideboard cupboard. That sort of thing makes marmalade unnecessarily expensive, and the intelligent reader of these hints is not likely to be so improvident.

A PICTURE

The picture buyer has an almost unlimited range of subjects and sizes to pick from, and they are all good. The important point is to avoid anything painted by a modern artist. They are such rotters. Choice works can be picked up in old cathedral towns frequented by tourists (Americans for choice); also Strand auction rooms. The name is everything in the picture world, and you cannot go wrong if you select a Claude, Velasquez or Reynolds. Any of these will look well in a birdseye maple frame set off by saddlebag furniture, and should prove a permanent investment. You will never sell them. The English school may, however, be studied with advantage by the collector, if only as a matter of interest. It is known as the open-air or pavement school, and deals with *genre* subjects. Typical examples are: A Salmon (in halves); The Sailor's Return; and Heart pierced by Arrow.

It is as well, before handing over your cheque, to examine your purchase. Dealers, with the best intentions, sometimes err in their descriptions of the goods which they handle. There is no doubt that the Old Masters were industrious, but it is unlikely that they painted more than a couple of thousand pictures each. To test the genuineness of your purchase place it under a tap of hot water and scrub it with a hard brush. If it survives this treatment it is indeed a masterpiece, and you may rest assured that your £5 note has not been wasted.

L. E. F.

The Commercial Drama

The Lesson of the Coal Strike:—You can fuel all the people some of the time and some of the people all the time, but you can't fuel all the people all the time. (27.3.12.)

THE COMMERCIAL DRAMA

(Sir J. Lyons, whose one-act play appears at the Palace Theatre, declares his aim to be to treat the Drama from the business point of view.)

Critique, by our Financial Expert, of the *première* of the Bros. Melville's new drama, *The Forger Foiled*:—

VILLAIN'S INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

Dr.	Expenditure	£	s.	d.
To	Legal expenses while in prison	986	6	8
„	Bribery	7093	17	2
„	Personal Expenses—			
	Champagne, cigars, dressing, banquets, week-ends, motoring	11000	6	3
„	Gambling Losses	8678	12	5
„	Music-halls	1899	2	11
„	Restoration of ill-gotten gains	19223	18	9
„	Cost of Inquest	21	0	0
„	Poison	15	13	6
„	Disgorge—Proceeds of Forged Will (as <i>per contra</i>)	152496	3	4
		<hr/> £300420 17 10 <hr/>		

Cr.	Income	£	s.	d.
By	Forged Will	152496	3	4
„	Blackmail	27009	17	1
„	Swindling at Cards	16896	3	9
„	Embezzled—			
	Hero	5813	0	6
	Own Sister	123	8	4
	Widow	0	0	7
	Cab bilking	0	7	4
		<hr/>		
„	Deficit	5936	16	9
		<hr/> 98081 16 11 <hr/>		
		<hr/> £300420 17 10 <hr/>		

The Commercial Drama

HEROINE'S ACCOUNT

<i>Dr.</i>	<i>Expenditure</i>	£	s.	d.
To	Donations to charities, parish work, sick poor, orphans, etc.	25	7	9½
„	Purchase of dresses	0	14	3¼
„	Legal Expenses—			
	Finding Hero	1221	6	8
	Discovery of Wills	534	3	4
	Detection of Villain	841	15	11¼
„	Personal Expenses	0	9	1
		<u>£2623</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>1½</u>

<i>Cr.</i>	<i>Income</i>	£	s.	d.
By	Earned by Needlework	0	0	7½
„	Received from Clergy Orphans' Fund	0	14	6
„	Deficit	2623	2	0¼
		<u>£2623</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>1½</u>

HERO'S ACCOUNT

<i>Dr.</i>	<i>Expenditure</i>	£	s.	d.
To	Sleuth Hounds	2	3	6
„	Deficit brought forward from Heroine's Account	2623	2	0¼
„	Personal Expenses	1	14	4
„	Charities—Sick Comrades, Oppressed Victims, Shipwrecked Crew	74	6	2
„	Purchase of firearms (including cartridge used on Villain in last Act)	5	15	1
„	Elopement	2	2	0
„	Amusements	0	3	2¾
„	Given to Widowed Mother	87	2	4½
„	Banquet to friends, village rejoicing, fireworks, etc., at finish	120	4	11
„	Balance—Cash in hand	236109	12	10½
		<u>£239026</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>6</u>

The Commercial Drama

<i>Cr.</i>	<i>Income</i>	£	s.	d.
By	Wages earned as cabin-boy in First Act, less unjust deductions by employer .	5	9	6
„	Charitable donations from sympathisers .	21	17	0
„	Proceeds of Will disgorged by Villain .	152496	3	4
„	Buried Treasure from Wreck (South Pacific)	86502	16	8
		<hr/>		
		£239026	6	6
		<hr/>		

I certify that I have audited the books of *The Forger Foiled*, as produced at the Lyceum Theatre, and that the foregoing fairly represents the state of affairs of the principal parties at the fall of the curtain. The accounts of the Villain were in a mass of confusion and fraudulently kept, and the available assets represented by dishonoured bills, bogus cheques and investments of a highly speculative nature. The Hero appears to have been of an unbusiness like type; his assets at the beginning of the play consisted solely of his savings as cabin-boy (16s. 2d.) and a silver watch, his financial position being greatly strengthened by a sum of £152,496 3s. 4d. under a will accidentally discovered in the Fourth Act, under which the Villain had previously benefited. He handicapped himself severely by his devotion to the Heroine, a female of no available assets at the rise of the curtain, who might be written off as a bad debt. He had greatly injured his financial position by the rejection of the Villainess, a person of doubtful antecedents but of considerable social influence.

My examination of the accounts has been largely impeded by most of the important documents having been in wrecks under water, in pirates' secret caverns, and in hidden panels on the Villain's premises.

I am, dear Sirs,

Yours faithfully,

T. SMITH, *Chartered Accountant.*

H. R.

Mr. Vade Mecum Abroad

MR. VADE MECUM ABROAD

I met Mr. Vade Mecum in Italy. His intention was of the kindest: to help me over stiles; but he was less useful than entertaining. I wanted to admire him, as we always wish to be admired by those whom we instruct; but he made it difficult. One keeps one's admiration for the self-possessed capable persons, and here was V.M. blundering at the very start. No sooner did we arrive at the station and perilously descend to the far-away Italian platform than I found him saying to the porter—in faultless Italian, I admit, although possibly a shade too grammatical—‘I have left my bag in the train’, followed by the question, ‘Where is the Lost Property Office?’ This came as the greatest shock because on the steamer across he had been enquiring, ‘*Dove tengono le cinture di salvataggio?*’ and I had honoured him for his forethought.

That he could be impulsive I gathered from the things he said at the bicycle-mender's, where I met him a few days afterwards. How he came to have such an accident I never learned, but some idea of the completeness of his smash may be gathered from the tale of damage that he told. Thus: ‘The brake does not act. The frame is twisted. The back wheel is buckled. The handle has come off. The fork is snapped. The lamp will not burn. I have lost the pump and the spanners.’ It seemed to me a mistake in tact on the part of a Mentor to let one have such a glimpse of the disastrous side of his life.

On our way from the station I gathered that he is not a generous man from the fact that his genial remark to the cabman, ‘Hurry up! I will give you a good tip’, was followed instantly by, ‘Take me to the nearest doctor’, which seemed to indicate a fearful and sudden spasm brought about by the promise of unwonted munificence; but it was at the jeweller's that he came out in the least handsome light. ‘I wish’, he said (always in best Italian), ‘to choose an emerald brooch for my wife.’ That was promising and affectionate, I thought, except that perhaps it did not point quite to the latest fashion in jewels; and incidentally it suggested that Mrs. Vade Mecum was not exactly artistic. But V.M. went on to spoil everything. ‘Tell me’, he added, ‘the lowest price.’ Ah, V.M. (thought I), not thus did

Mr. Vade Mecum Abroad

you address the jeweller in the days of your courtship! Worse was to follow. 'I want', he went on, 'to purchase a few charms'; and here again I began by thinking well of his good nature. He evidently had some daughters or nieces to whom he wished, very properly, to take a souvenir of his pleasant Italian journeys. But imagine my pain when he added the deadly words, '*Qualche cosa a buon mercato che sia d' effetto*' (Something cheap but showy).

That was too much. At that point I threw away this conversation book and bought another.

C. L. G. and E. V. L.

GEORGE'S WIFE'S BABY

From one point of view, of course, it is George's baby. But somehow I never think of it in that light—partly, I suppose, because I have never come across George and it together, and have scarcely so much as heard him speak of it. There are times, indeed, when I am disposed to doubt if George has ever seen it.

I myself met it for the first time the other day.

'Isn't he a darling!' cried George's wife ecstatically, as she held it out for my inspection; and I could not help being at once struck by the fact that it was a singularly obese baby.

I looked at it critically and dispassionately, but thought it best not to say exactly what I felt.

'Well, can't you speak?' asked George's wife. 'What do you think of him?'

'I—I was thinking that. . . . Surely he doesn't take enough exercise?' I burst out at last, trying to put it as nicely as I could.

'What on earth do you mean?'

I saw that it was necessary to state the truth boldly and bluntly.

'Why,' I said, 'can't you see for yourself how stout he's getting? If I were you', I went on impressively, 'I should knock off one of his meals. And don't let him sleep so much after lunch; you can't help putting on flesh if you do that.'

'Putting on flesh, indeed!' cried my sister-in-law with indigna-

George's Wife's Baby

tion. 'Why, everybody says he's the nicest little fellow that ever was—isn't 'oo, icksey-dicksey? He'd take first prize at any Baby Show—wouldn't 'oo, toodleums?'

'Is that his name?'

'Is what his name?'

'Toodleums.'

'No.'

'Icksey-dicksey, then?'

'No.'

'Then why . . .' But there was a stiffened look about George's wife's shoulders as she bent over her offspring that I did not quite like. So once more I sought refuge in silence, and for a space engaged in quiet contemplation of the fleshy mass.

'Well?' asked George's wife again; and again I found I was expected to say something.

'What are you going to do with him?' I inquired with an effort.

This time there was a metallic gleam in George's wife's eyes that I liked even less than the stiffening of her shoulders.

'Is it possible', she asked, 'that you are trying to work off on me a so-called joke which even the back pages of the magazines have got tired of printing? Do you want to know whether I am going to keep it or drown it? Because I may tell you at once that I've quite made up my mind to keep it.'

'You misunderstand me. I merely wanted to know what profession you intended him for.'

'Well, whatever happens, he's certainly not going to be a horrid, spiteful journalist man who's always poking fun or slinging mud, is 'oo, icks—are you, Dicky darling?'

'Dicky darling', looking his worst, answered with a loud yell.

'There, then, did his nasty uncle make him cry?'

'No, he did not,' I answered shortly.

Miraculously enough, at the sound of my voice the crying stopped, and I turned a triumphant gaze on George's wife. I could see she was in two minds whether to make the baby yell again or not, but in the end her better feelings conquered.

'Ask unky to show 'oo his nice new watch,' was her next foolish

George's Wife's Baby

remark, and she waited expectantly. I waited too. 'Well, why don't you show it to him?' she said at last.

'I was waiting for him to ask me, you told him to, you know.'

'Bless the man, does he think a three-months-old baby can talk? Here, give it to me.'

'I—I think I must have left it at home.'

'Then what's that you've got on the end of your chain?'

There was no help for it, and I had to take out the watch—a new and valuable one, given by dear Aunt Josephine to her favourite (and most talented) nephew on my last birthday—open the case and hold it up to his ear. I got tired of this before he did, and then the trouble began, culminating in the point at which offspring and hairspring became hopelessly entangled. It may well be, as George's wife afterwards alleged, that I gave free expression to my feelings, and even if I did say 'Drat the little beast!' (which I have no recollection of doing) there was surely plenty of provocation. What I do remember quite plainly, however, is that before I went I gave George's wife some sound advice concerning her baby.

'It seems to me,' I said, 'that he's well on the road to become a smug, self-conscious, self-indulgent little prig. He has absolutely no thought beyond himself. But what can you expect if you keep him at home all day? Let him run about with others of his own age, or, better still, send him to a good public school. That'll knock some of the nonsense out of him, and take off some of his ridiculous fat into the bargain. You mark my words——'

But by this time I was alone in the room, and since then I have not been on the best of terms with George's wife. Nor with George either, for that matter. I happened to ask him for seven-and-six, the price of repairs to my watch, and his reply was worthy neither of a father nor of a brother.

'It's your own fault,' he said coldly. 'What on earth did you want to give it to him for?'

Two hours later I thought of a suitable answer; but the only person handy on whom I could have worked it off was the office boy, and he hasn't got a baby.

S. J. F.

On Choosing a Piano

The War Office, according to the *Express*, sold the right to film the King's recent visit to Aldershot to the highest bidder. At this rate it may be possible one day to carry on a war at a profit. (29.5.12.)

ON CHOOSING A PIANO

(A few suggestions by a well-known Clerk of the Scales)

Select a piano as you would a hunter—or a wife.

There are several breeds of pianos—the Cottage, the Baby Grand, the Upright Grand, the Semi-Grand, the Grand, the Double Grand and the Gorgeous. The last-named, embellished with folding doors and jewelled in sixteen holes, is at once a thing of beauty and a cabinet of mystery. When your host throws open its ornamental portals you begin to wonder if he is going to look for a clean collar or to show you the razor-edged crease on his new evening trousers. When he seats himself before it you imagine that he has forgotten your presence and is about to attend to his correspondence, and when the flag falls the beauty of the first few opening bars of one of Mendelssohn's 'Songs Without Words' is lost upon you.

Having decided on the kind of piano you want, or your wife wants, or the most important member of your household insists upon having, you enter the establishment in which this particular breed is stabled. Have courage.

•Take a good look round first, with an eye to form and colour. Avoid the chestnuts and light bays. A good upstanding dark roan will probably attract your attention before long. Approach it in a soothing manner on the near side. Spend a moment in admiring the straight foreleg tapering to the fetlock or castor-joint, and before exposing the keyboard open the manhole at the top and peer into the place 'where the notes come from'. This will convince the groom in attendance that you are not a novice. If the light is bad, strike a match, but not on the polished top; strike only on the back of the box, where the wood is plain. Note the position of the carburetters, and having satisfied yourself that the thing is fitted throughout with

On Choosing a Piano

the Major's special wires and has a good action, open its mouth and have a good look at the ivories.

The question now arises: Are they really ivory, or are they bonzoline? You see, it makes such a difference in the angle when playing 'The Long Jenny', for instance. Having settled this knotty point to your entire satisfaction you cannot do better than look for a nice G. Most pianos include a few of these in their curriculum. If you can't find one, select an A or a B, or some other easy note, and strike it fairly and squarely. Don't be nervous and fizzle the shot. Tilt your hat on one side so as to rest your ear against the sounding-board. If there is any wheezing the brute is a roarer, and you should pass on; but if the breathing is quite regular and melodious you are possibly on a good thing and should make excursions among the other notes. Don't be in a hurry. The place doesn't close for another five minutes, and business probably isn't so brisk that the manager will call, 'Time, gentlemen, please!' before he has taken your order.

Having assured yourself that the chest and lungs are all right, the pitch has to be considered. Don't pronounce it as too high or too low or too uneven until you have tried a few overs—or overtures, as they are sometimes called. If not then to your liking have it rolled between the innings and try again.

R. R.

TRÈS SEC

*Blush not, my Thomas, though it is a hoary—
Stalwart yet hoary—yarn that you have told.
Believe me, I delight in what is old.
Tell me, I beg, the really old old story,
Such as the summer-sleepy clubmen weave:
I loathe your raconteur who makes believe
That he has got a new, quite new one up his sleeve.*

*Why not judge jests like vintages, like china?
(Thomas, on your behalf I ask, why not?)
I'd hear you say seductively, 'I've got*

Très Sec

*Quite a sound year in jests'—what time you dine a
Particular old pal—'you'll try it? Do!'
And then he'd smack his lips and hear it through,
Your special bottling—say, 'Punch, 1852'.*

*Gladly we'd quaff the wine that cheered Catullus,
Gladly go in for classical antiques;
Shall we then feel disgust when someone wreaks
Old jokes on us—when, Thomas, you can cull us
Fruitage of wit which charmed the Abbassids,
Quips of Sicilian shepherds herding kids,
Tales with which Pan convulsed Maenads and Bassarids?*

*No, no! For me, I own I long to hear a
Really indubitably ancient jest.
Tickle me now with one of Noah's best,
Suitably turned to fit the place and era.
Take heart of grace, my Thomas, try again:
Repeat some jape about our English rain,
Exploit that firm old friend the London-Chatham train.*

W. W. B. F.

The House of Lords has decided that the Crystal Palace may be sold, and it is said that a syndicate of Suffragettes has offered, if the building is to be demolished, to do the job for nothing, just for the sake of the practice. (17. 7. 12.)

THE GIFT OF SPEECH

(Overheard at the Oval)

I

THE SEAT

*A man who has been sitting on one of the free seats
on the edge of the turf gets up and leaves. Another
man standing prepares to take the vacant place.*

The Gift of Speech

STANDING MAN. (*to the occupant of the next seat to the vacant one.*)
May I ask if you are keeping that seat?

OTHER MAN. No.

S.M. Then I may take it?

O.M. Certainly.

S.M. Thank you. (*He steps over and takes it.*) It's a rest to sit down after standing.

O.M. Yes; standing's very tiring after a while.

S.M. Funny thing, but this is the only unoccupied seat I've found ever since I've been here. Lucky I was just here when your friend went.

O.M. It is pretty crowded to-day, isn't it?

S.M. I've been standing quite two hours. Had about enough of it.

O.M. I was here at the beginning.

S.M. Ah, that's the way to get a seat. You're all right, then.

O.M. Yes, I'm quite comfortable. Cricket's more pleasant to watch when you're sitting down.

S.M. It is, isn't it? Standing's so tiring. I never thought I should get a seat, such heaps of people here. A bit of luck, finding this seat.

O.M. You'll find it quite comfortable. No back, of course.

S.M. A back makes a difference, doesn't it? Still, anything's better than standing.

O.M. Yes, that's so; standing's very tiring.

II

THE HOLIDAY

FIRST MAN. Hullo, how are you?

SECOND MAN. I'm all right. Are you all right?

F.M. Yes, I'm pretty fit. I never thought I should see you here.

S.M. Oh, I often look in for a little while. How have you been?

The Gift of Speech .

- F.M. Very well, thanks; nothing to complain of. And you?
- S.M. I've been all right.
- F.M. Been away for a holiday yet?
- S.M. Yes; I went to Norfolk.
- F.M. Good time?
- S.M. Very. Golf and fishing. You been away?
- F.M. Not yet; I'm thinking of going next week.
- S.M. Where are you going?
- F.M. Normandy, I think. Do you know Normandy?
- S.M. Can't say I do. I've been to the Channel Islands, though.
- F.M. Have you been away yet this year?
- S.M. Yes, to Norfolk.
- F.M. Norfolk; that sounds all right. Been pretty well this summer?
- S.M. Yes, all right, thanks; quite fit. Where did you say you spent your holiday?
- F.M. I haven't been away yet. I'm going next week. Normandy, I think. I wonder if you could tell me anything about a place called Granville.
- S.M. No, I don't know Normandy. Wish I did.
- F.M. Jolly, if you could come over.
- S.M. Sorry, I can't; but I've had my holiday.
- F.M. Have you? Where did you go?
- S.M. I went to Norfolk.
- F.M. Did you? Well, I'm going to Normandy, I believe.

C. L. G. and E. V. L.

OUR COLONIES

CANADA

At various times and by various statesmen our various Colonies have all been described as the brightest gem in the British crown or diadem, as the case may be; but from sheer weight of repetition Canada may definitely be said to merit this appellation. It is a very

Our Colonies

big country, and quite a lot of it is so unknown as to be largely a matter of guesswork. It extends from the United States in the South, to as far North as you like to travel; and in a lateral direction it is only the mighty oceans which limit it. Its expansion in the matter of trade is, of course, largely determined by the fact that it is a British Colony. But then every country has some drawback with which to contend.

Canada is a land of extremes. In summer the weather is so hot that the asbestos lining to the fireproof buildings has been known to melt; and in winter the snow is so deep that special elevators have to be instituted to convey the residents down to the roofs of the dwellings. Of course this only refers to certain parts of Canada. In many districts the climate is one long dream of delicious delight. For further particulars see the letterpress so kindly supplied by the Immigration Department.

But it must be admitted that the extraordinary variations in temperature—in some parts—are not without effect on the inhabitants. They have to cram a year's work into six months, because it is far too cold during the winter to do anything except sit with their feet on the stove, talking politics. The true-born British workman hates Canada during the summer; but when the peaceful spell of winter is o'er the land he flocks there in his thousands, convinced that it is the one country in the world that is really suited to his ideas of what constitutes a hard day's work. And when he is set the task of doing chores round the house and splitting firewood he returns to the land of his birth and writes letters to the papers about it.

True Canadians never mind their own brand of cold weather. The thermometer drops to about thirty degrees below zero, and they wrap up in furs and go careering all over the country in bobsleighs. Yet, when they come to England and experience a November day in London, they perish miserably—which only serves to show what a hardy race are we Londoners.

The scenery in Canada is immense. The Great Plains stretch right across the country till they meet the Rocky Mountains. The Rocky Mountains are also very wonderful, and are principally

Our Colonies

famous on account of the difficulty experienced in getting the Canadian-Pacific Railway across them. Otherwise they are comparatively useless, and are generally floated as mining propositions.

Canada is the greatest wheat-growing country in the world. For full particulars see the letterpress so obligingly furnished by the Immigration Department.

Canada is also famous for its gold mines. It keeps most of these in out-of-the-way corners, such as Alaska and the upper reaches of the Saskatchewan, and always seems to be able to find a new mine when it desires to get rid of the more turbulent spirits among its population. It is a great pity there are no gold mines in England.

Canada is a wonderful country for sport. It is a veritable hunter's paradise. For further particulars see the letterpress so kindly supplied by the Immigration Department. You can shoot almost anything, from a moose bull to a rapid; and, if you care to venture into the Western districts, you may even bag a man or two. The most exclusive prize, however, is the grizzly bear. A unique advantage about shooting in Canada is that business can be combined with pleasure, most of the animals there being covered with a very expensive kind of fur, which finds a ready market throughout the world.

The principal pastimes in the country are log-rolling, broncho-busting, and exploring. The first consists in letting loose a large number of tree-trunks on a swift river, and then jumping from one to the other; the second is the art of remaining on a horse which is convinced that you belong somewhere else; and the third is indulged in because otherwise so much of the country would go to waste.

Canada is famous for its maple sugar, its North-Western Police, the siege of Quebec, Sir Gilbert Parker, and the North Magnetic Pole. Next to the Police, the most remarkable feature is the Magnetic Pole, there being only one other specimen in the world, and that is a very inferior article.

Lastly, Canadians drink rye whisky in preference to the kind produced by Bonnie Scotland. This is, perhaps, their greatest achievement.

W. W.

Abracadabra

As the result of a recent fire at a dairy the proprietor is now advertising a salvage sale of milk slightly injured by water. (20.11.12.)

ABRACADABRA

The Old Forces really do not play the game nowadays.

I had spent a long and trying afternoon in a sale-room that is described as historic. I had not gone with any intention of bidding, merely to look on; and yet at four o'clock I had still bought nothing.

'Lot 321,' announced the auctioneer. 'Five Roman fibulae or brooches, a supposed spear-head believed to be from the bed of the Thames, an ancient bronze ring, a plaster cast (*Venus Surprised*), three seventeenth-century pipe-stoppers, a bundle of French assignats and a galvanic battery—faulty. A speculative lot.'

No one responded.

'Sevenpence,' I ventured diffidently. There were seven items to the lot, you will observe.

'I must remind you, Sir,' said the auctioneer severely, 'that the rules printed in the catalogue, which you have before you, fix one shilling as the minimum initial bid for any lot.'

I corrected myself. 'One-and-twopence, I mean, of course.'

The hammer paused, then fell with the conventional tap.

'What name, please?'

'Cash,' I replied largely.

I paid my cash and received the lot. I had not as yet examined it, but with it now before me I began to fear that I had been beguiled into overbidding myself.

'Oh, dear! oh, dear!' panted a voice at my elbow, 'am I too late? Can you tell me, my dear Sir, if Lot 321 has gone?'

'In a sense, yes,' I replied, indicating the miscellaneous flotsam before me. 'In another sense it has come.'

'You have bought it!' exclaimed the old gentleman—he was really, now that I came to look at him, a very patriarchal, not to

Abracadabra

say oriental, personage—‘may I ask, what have you bought it for?’

‘Well,’ I admitted, ‘that’s just what I was asking myself when you interposed.’

‘I mean,’ he said a little impatiently, ‘what particular object attracted your fancy. I can scarcely imagine that if the galvanic battery was what you desired you will have any strong partiality for the Roman fibulae; or if your heart was set on the alleged spear-head that you would not be ready to consider an offer for the French assignats. But perhaps the shortest way will be for me to explain myself definitely. I have a partiality for this antique bronze ring; may I acquire it at your own price?’

‘Certainly,’ I replied. ‘Or, better still, at yours. I might, however, point out to you,’ I added, referring him to the catalogue, ‘that Rule 4 says: “No bid shall commence at less than a shilling . . . and so on in proportion”.’

‘Assuredly,’ he admitted a little vaguely, but picking up the ring with evident satisfaction. ‘You have been markedly generous. I am not to be outdone. In return for this ancient bronze ring you shall be granted three wishes—have whatever you like.’

‘Thank you. I don’t mind a scotch and soda,’ I said, perhaps by mere force of habit.

Immediately at my hand stood a tall crystal glass of the beverage I had specified. The cut of the vessel was curious and antique, but the contents were above suspicion.

‘I only wish,’ I remarked, as I put the glass down again, ‘that I could always have one from under that label for the asking.’

‘You can,’ replied the venerable stranger, ‘henceforth.’

I thought it as well to try the dodge while he was there.

‘Then I’ll have another,’ I declared, and the glass was instantly replenished.

‘Your demands are satisfied?’ suggested the old man.

‘Not quite,’ I replied cunningly. ‘I know what I am doing. That last wasn’t a separate wish—it comes under the generous and inexhaustible provision of wish B. And that being so I don’t mind ordering up another for you.’

Needless to say, a third miraculous whisky and soda was there.

Abracadabra

'Have your final wish,' said the stranger, pushing aside the glass. a little ungraciously, I thought, after my delicate attention. 'I am anxious to be gone from this place.'

I began to think that the old man was rather selfish and had possibly over-reached me in the bargain.

'I can have anything I name for the third wish?' I demanded.

'You have only to mention it.'

'Then I'll have the ring back, thank you.'

'The ring!' he repeated incredulously.

'Precisely. The antique bronze ring which you are wearing', I replied.

He seemed a little dazed still, but he pulled it off his finger and it was in my hand.

'Crafty and perfidious one', he began.

'Wait a moment,' I replied: 'Now, will you give me three wishes for this ring?'

'Have I not spoken it? You have only to declare your demands.'

'Very well. Here you are. Now we begin over again. And I only hope there's no catch in it.'

I saw a tricky look come into his venerable eyes and I knew in a flash that I had squandered wish A.

'Ah-ha, so that counts, does it?' I remarked. 'Very well. Now will you knock it off, or shall I have the ring back again for wish B and then begin again? We have the long winter evening before us.'

'Proceed, excellency,' he entreated, with tears in his eyes; 'have it as your enlightened wisdom demands, only proceed.'

'All right; now this is really the start,' I agreed. 'I wish that I had a purse containing gold and that it would be replenished at once however often I emptied it, and—hold hard! I'm touching wood still, it all belongs to the same wish—that none else should be any the poorer by it and that I should be unable to lose the purse or to part from it by accident or through misapprehension.'

'It is granted.'

I felt something heavy come into my right-hand trouser pocket and I knew that a start had been made.

Abracadabra

'Secondly, I wish that I may at once become very accomplished amiable, entertaining, handsome, distinguished, learned, popular, eligible and in every other way desirable, and that none of these attributes may bring in its train the boomerang-like retribution that gentlemen of your craft traditionally keep up your sleeves.'

The venerable personage seemed to have several things to say in his own tongue and the incantation was a little lengthy. But at last he bowed.

'It is assured,' he declared. Strangely enough, I did not feel the slightest change in my personality.

'Finally—wish C—and most important,' I continued, 'I insist that in common fairness I shall be allowed to have a decent time in possession of my new qualities before I wake up.'

This is what I complain of. It was at that moment that I awoke.

E. B. S.

It was interesting to note that when the newspapers reappeared after their Christmas holiday the news had also played the game. There was none. (I.I.I3.)

WINTER SPORT

A TAILING PARTY

The procession prepared to start in the following order:—

- (1) A brace of sinister-looking horses.
- (2) Gaspard, the Last of the Bandits; or, 'Why cause a lot of talk by pushing your rich uncle over the cliff, when you can have him stabbed quietly for one franc fifty?' (If ever I were in any vendetta business I should pick Gaspard first.)
- (3) A sleigh full of lunch.
- (4) A few well-known ladies and gentlemen (being the cream of the Hôtel des Angéliques) on luges; namely, reading from left to right (which is really the best method—unless you are translating Hebrew), Simpson, Archie, Dahlia, Myra, me, Miss Cardew and Thomas.

Winter Sport

While Gaspard was putting the finishing knots to the luges, I addressed a few remarks to Miss Cardew, fearing that she might be feeling a little lonely amongst us. I said that it was a lovely day, and did she think the snow would hold off till evening? Also had she ever done this sort of thing before? I forget what her answers were.

Thomas meanwhile was exchanging badinage on the hotel steps with Miss Aylwyn. There must be something peculiar in the Swiss air, for in England Thomas is quite a respectable man . . . and a godfather.

'I suppose we *have* asked the right one,' said Myra doubtfully.

'His young affections are divided. There was a third girl in pink with whom he breakfasted a lot this morning. It is the old tradition of the sea, you know. A sailor—I mean an Admiralty civilian has a wife at every wireless station.'

'Take your seats, please,' said Archie. 'The horses are sick of waiting.'

We sat down. Archie took Dahlia's feet on his lap, Myra took mine, Miss Cardew took Thomas's. Simpson, alone in front, nursed a guide-book.

'*Enavant!*' cried Simpson in his best French-taught-in-twelve-lessons accent.

Gaspard muttered an oath to his animals. They pulled bravely. The rope snapped—and they trotted gaily down the hill with Gaspard.

We hurried after them with the luges. . . .

'It's a good joke,' said Archie, after this had happened three times, 'but, personally I weary of it. Miss Cardew, I'm afraid we've brought you out under false pretences. Thomas didn't explain the thing to you adequately. He gave you to understand that there was more in it than this.'

Gaspard, who seemed full of rope, produced a fourth piece and tied a knot that made even Simpson envious.

'Now, Samuel,' I begged, 'do keep the line taut this time. Why do you suppose we put your apricot suit right in the front? Is it, do you suppose, for the sunset effects at eleven o'clock in the morning, or is it that you may look after the rope properly?'

Winter Sport

'I'm awfully sorry, Miss Cardew,' said Simpson, feeling that somebody ought to apologise for something and knowing that Gaspard wouldn't, 'but I expect it will be all right now.'

We settled down again. Once more Gaspard cursed his horses, and once more they started off bravely. And this time we went with them.

'The idea all along,' I explained to Miss Cardew.

'I rather suspected it,' she said. Apparently she has a suspicious mind.

After the little descent at the start, we went uphill slowly for a couple of miles, and then more rapidly over the level. We had driven over the same road in a sleigh, coming from the station, and had been bitterly cold and extremely bored. Why our present position should be so much more enjoyable I didn't quite see.

'It's the expectation of an accident,' said Archie. 'At any moment now somebody may fall off. Good.'

'My dear old chap', said Simpson, turning round to take part in the conversation, 'why anybody *should* fall off——'

We went suddenly round a corner, and quietly and without any fuss whatever Simpson left his luge and rolled on to the track. Luckily any possibility of a further accident was at once avoided. There was no panic at all. Archie kicked the body temporarily out of the way; after which Dahlia leant over and pushed it thoughtfully to the side of the road. Myra warded it off with a leg as she neared it; with both hands I helped it into the deep snow from which it had shown a tendency to emerge; Miss Cardew put a foot out at it for safety; and Thomas patted it gently on the head as the end of the 'tail' went past. . . .

As soon as we had recovered our powers of speech—all except Miss Cardew, who was in hysterics—we called upon Gaspard to stop. He indicated with the back of his neck that it would be dangerous to stop just then; and it was not until we were at the bottom of the hill, nearly a mile from the place where Simpson left us, that the procession halted, and gave itself up again to laughter.

'I hope he is not hurt,' said Dahlia, wiping the tears from her eyes.

Winter Sport

'He wouldn't spoil a good joke like that by getting hurt,' said Myra confidently. 'He's much too much of a sportsman.'

'Why did he do it?' said Thomas.

'He suddenly remembered he hadn't packed his safety-razor. He's half-way back to the hotel by now.'

Miss Cardew remained in hysterics.

Ten minutes later a brilliant sunset was observed approaching from the north. A little later it was seen to be a large dish of apricots and cream.

'He draws near,' said Archie. 'Now then, let's be stern with him.'

At twenty yards' range, Simpson began to talk. His trot had heated him slightly.

'I say,' he said excitedly. 'You——'

Myra shook her head at him.

'Not done, Samuel,' she said reproachfully.

'Not what, Myra? What not——'

'You oughtn't to leave us like that without telling us.'

'After all,' said Archie, 'we are all one party, and we are supposed to keep together. If you prefer to go about by yourself, that's all right; but if we go to the trouble of arranging something for the whole party——'

'You might have caused a very nasty accident,' I pointed out. 'If you were in a hurry, you had only to say a word to Gaspard and he would have stopped for you to alight. Now I begin to understand why you kept cutting the rope at the start.'

'You have sent Miss Cardew into hysterics by your conduct,' said Dahlia.

Miss Cardew gave another peal. Simpson looked at her in dismay.

'I say, Miss Cardew, I'm most awfully sorry. I really didn't—— I say, Dahlia,' he went on confidentially, 'oughtn't we to do something about this? Rub her feet with snow or—I mean, I know there's *something* you do when people have hysterics. It's rather serious if they go on. Don't you burn feathers under their nose?' He began to feel in his pockets. 'I wonder if Gaspard's got a feather?'

With a great effort Miss Cardew pulled herself together. 'It's all right, thank you,' she said in a stifled voice.

Winter Sport

'Then let's get on,' said Archie.

We resumed our seats once more. Archie took Dahlia's feet on his lap. Myra took mine. Miss Cardew took Thomas's. Simpson clung tight to his luge with both hands.

'Right!' cried Archie.

Gaspard swore at his horses. They pulled bravely. The rope snapped—and they trotted gaily up the hill with Gaspard.

We hurried after them with the luges. . . .

A. A. M.

Except that he fell and sprained his ankle during the ceremony, was attacked by ptomaine poisoning at the subsequent dinner, and had to sail for America alone, owing to his bride missing the boat, the wedding of Mr. Julius Woery of Schiedam may be said to have gone off without a hitch. (19.3.13.)

ADJUSTMENTS

I wish I could make up my mind before leaving London just how long I want to stay. I never can. That is the weak spot of this coupon system. It's a fine comprehensive system in its way, I don't deny. One starts upon the campaign armed at every point, relieved in advance of all harassing problems of barter and exchange. At its best it can cover a sleigh-drive or a cup of coffee in a station restaurant, though for my own part, until one can get coupons for drinks, for the purchase of blotting-paper and wax matches, and for having one's hair cut, I cannot consider it to be wholly adequate. And tipping by coupon is not practised yet to any great extent. But the trouble is that no reasonable person ever knows how long he wants to stay in Switzerland, and whenever he adds on another week he is almost certain to have to move out of his room. For these little instruments irrevocably fix your exits and your entrances, and while you have been enjoying its hospitality your room has been booked by someone else—in an office in London—who arrives one

Adjustments

fine day to drive you out, at the point of the coupon, so to speak.

It is just this necessity of moving from one room to another that makes my life a burden in the Alps. You see there is a good deal to be done before I can get my room adjusted to my requirements, and I simply hate to leave it when I have got it right. Much as one regrets the use of underhand methods, most of these adjustments have to be carried out by stealth, for lack of coupons to cover one's minor necessities. And I never like to give the servants extra trouble when they are so busy.

In the first place, I always have to have an additional table. This is generally obtained under cover of darkness from an empty room on a different floor. Of course one must expect reprisals, and for this reason it is well either (1) to secure the second table by padlock and chain to the leg of the bed, or (2) to disguise it effectively. Then there is the case of the bath-towel, which can be obtained without any difficulty by the simple expedient of taking a hot tub. But it must be kept under lock and key. Ink will be found in the salon, which is generally unoccupied during the dinner hour. I was once held up by the concierge as I conveyed it up in the lift. But knowing as I did that ink is an awkward thing to snatch at, if it comes to a scuffle, I made no reply whatever to his protests. (And here I would remark that it is of no small advantage in the game to maintain an unimpaired ignorance of the language.)

By this time we are getting on, and may turn our attention to alterations inside the room itself. The furniture will have to be shifted about, so that it is possible (on really cold days) to sit on the radiator with one's feet on the end of the sofa. Then comes the question of the electric light. The Swiss electric light has one peculiarity. It goes on all the time, and it is not etiquette to turn it off, except on really brilliant days. But that does not compensate one for the miserable quality of the illumination of the bedrooms. Your first business is to make a careful and detailed inspection of the public rooms. You may find it disheartening. In many of them the lights will be either quite out of reach or protected by massive cut-glass globes which make it impossible to get at them. But at last, if you persevere, it is probable that in some secluded little writing-room

Adjustments

or corner of the lounge you will come upon an unprotected bulb of great power and brilliancy that is within reach. It remains to effect an exchange. This is not always so easy as it looks, for you must choose your moment, and if you wander about waiting for your chance, with the bulb from the bedroom up your sleeve, you are leaving the bedroom itself defenceless. If it is discovered to be in the dark suspicions will be aroused. After some years of experience, I find myself that the best plan is to have a bulb in hand. This is simply annexed, at the outset, from the far end of a remote passage. You keep it waiting in your pocket—though you have to be careful if you are out ski-ing—till your opportunity comes. Then you silently and swiftly substitute it for the one you have marked down. When you have in turn transferred that one to your bedroom, you will still have an extra bulb in hand, which can be used in the same way when you have to move your room. You take your light along with you.

Believe me, there is no room that can be made more comfortable than the average room in a Swiss hotel. But it does take a little care. I have been fortunate this year in sticking to Number 34 from the day when I first arrived many weeks ago, and as I have been in a particularly acquisitive mood I am bound to say, on looking round, that I have a lot of nice stuff about me. I fancy there will be a great scene on the day after my departure, when it comes to the sacking of Number 34.

B. S.

ONCE UPON •A TIME

THE SIGN

Once upon a time there was an innkeeper who, strange to say, was unable to make both ends meet. Nothing that he tried was any use: he even placed in the windows a notice to the effect that his house was 'under entirely new management', but that too was in vain. So in despair he consulted a wise woman.

'It is quite simple,' she said, as she pocketed her fee. 'You must change the name.'

Once Upon a Time

'But it has been "The Golden Lion" for centuries,' he replied.

'You must change the name,' she said. 'You must call it "The Eight Bells"; and you must have a row of seven bells as the sign.'

'Seven?' he said; 'but that's absurd. What will that do?'

'Go home and see,' said the wise woman.

So he went home and did as she told him.

And straightway every wayfarer who was passing paused to count the bells, and then hurried into the inn to point out the mistake, each apparently believing himself to be the only one who had noticed it, and all wishing to refresh themselves for their trouble; carts and carriages drew up; motorists stopped their chauffeurs and, with the usual enormous difficulty, got them to go back; and the joke found its way into the guide-books.

The result was that the innkeeper grew as fat as most of his class, lost his health and made his fortune.

E. V. L.

'A man left £10,000 the other day,' said Sir William Byles. 'I would not allow it.' In justice to the man we think it should be pointed out that he didn't want to leave it. (7.5.13.)

THE HICCUP

We met in a crowd, in fact at Henley Regatta. He looked quite an old man, though I suppose he must have been my contemporary—but even of this I am not quite sure. He was trying to run with a race, had rushed violently into me, and had panted a request for pardon. Then a recognising look came over his furrowed face and he did what all the recognisers do: 'My dear old chap,' he said, 'fancy meeting you here! Now I bet you don't remember me.'

I kept to the rules of the game, put on a look of bright intelligence and said I remembered his face perfectly, but that for the moment his name had escaped me.

'Ah well,' he said, 'it's a good many years since we met. Old

The Hiccup

tempus does keep at it, you know; he doesn't spare any of us, does he? Though, for the matter of that, you've kept your fig—— (*hic*) wonderfully. Bother this hiccup. I get it at the most inconvenient times. Just like a motor-car on a bad road. It's indiges—— (*hic*) you know, an awful nuisance. Now I'll remind you of something that once happened to (*hic*) and me, and then I'll lay a thousand you'll remember my name.

'It was in eighty——(*hic*)——no, it wasn't; it was in eighty——(*hic-hic*). That was the year in which I shaved off my (*hic*), and I can fix it by that. You'd just begun (*hic*) in the (*hic-hic*) and I was thinking of doing the same. It was very hot weather and I remember you always wore a white (*hic*) and patent leather (*hic*). It was the fashion then. We weren't so careless about our dress as they are nowadays. Why, I actually saw a man walking along (*hic-hic*) yesterday in a (*hic*) and a (*hic*), and nobody seemed a bit surprised about it. Well, one morning I met you in the (*hic-hic*) and asked you if you were going to (*hic*) this year. You said, yes, you were, and would I join the party. There was just one place left in the (*hic*) and if I could manage to come you knew Mrs. (*hic*) would be delighted. I said I didn't really know her, but you said it didn't matter; you'd introduce me properly and look after me, and it was sure to be all right. Just at that (*hic*) young what's-his-name—dear me, now there's a name I've forgotten, but you'll remember him, a short stout man with a regular (*hic*) and a (*hic-hic*)——'

'Belmore,' I suggested.

'No, I don't know Belmore. You couldn't mistake the man, once you'd seen him. He had a (*hic*) in the middle of his (*hic-hic*) and twisted his (*hic*) frightfully when he spoke. Anyhow, he came up and asked you if you had room for him in your (*hic*) party. This was a facer, because he was about as unpopu——(*hic*) a man as you could find in the whole of (*hic*). You began to say something about not being quite certain as to going this year, as the health of your (*hic*) was giving the family a good deal of anxiety, but you'd let him know later on. However, he wasn't going to be put off in that way and he started worrying you. I thought it was time to help you, so I put in my oar and said, "My dear" (*hic*)—I wasn't

The Hiccup

bothered with these infernal hiccups then—"my dear chap," I said, "can't you see that the whole thing's off this year? If (*hic*) can't undertake it nobody else can. We'll hope for better (*hic*) next year." Before he could say anything there was a frightful clatter which made us all jump, and a (*hic*) with his (*hic-hic*) dangling on the ground came dashing along right on top of us. You and I got out of the way just in time, but old thingummy wasn't so lucky. It took him right plumb in the (*hic*), and before you could say (*hic-hic*) he was sprawling on his (*hic*) and shouting for help. He wasn't much hurt—just a few (*hic*) and a deepish (*hic*) on his (*hic*), but it settled his chances of going to (*hic*) that year. It was a great blessing for us, for he'd have ruined any party with his (*hic*) and his (*hic*). That's the story, and now I'll guarantee you remember me.'

But at this moment another race came past, and he was swept away in a mob of running enthusiasts. When I last heard him he was shouting at the top of his voice, 'Oh, well rowed (*hic*); you're gaining. Keep it (*hic*) and get (*hic*) of it.'

If these lines should meet his eye, will he communicate his name to me, c/o. the Editor? I am the tall, handsome, dignified man, with the blond beard, to whom he talked for some minutes outside the (*hic*) enclosure on the towpath side.

R. C. L.

In consequences of complaints by Suffragettes, certain prison vans will in future be labelled 'Ladies Only'. (28.5.13.)

THE MAENAD

*There is a maiden fair as dawn
Who sometimes spies me from afar,
And chases me on furious feet
As down the long suburban street
I gambol like Nijinsky's 'Faun'
To catch the infernal car.*

The Maenad

*At daybreak when the winds are fresh,
Or, more exactly, 9.15,
Not seldom shall you see this sight,
The nymph's pursuit, the poet's flight,
As if he funk'd the rosy mesh
Of Cyprus' dove-drawn queen.*

*It causes quite a pleasant stir,
This hundred-yard Olympic burst;
The newsboy whispers to his pal,
'How exquisitely Bacchanal!'
The loafers lay short odds on her
To reach the tube-lift first.*

*So, ere the sordid years began,
Before aphasia took the Muse,
Athwart the uplands, thick with pine,
His rout pursued the god of wine,
Or shepherdesses danced to Pan
(but not in grey suède shoes.)*

*Breathless we run; without a pause
We win the gates of Pluto's grot;
She gives me neither look nor word,
The cage descends; we join the herd,
Our ways are sundered now, because
I smoke and she does not.*

*But though her frenzy seems to sink
Before she grabs her swain-elect,
Though never in her wild, wild arms
She lures me captive to her charms
And bears me off (indeed, I think,
The lift-man would object);*

The Maenad

*Though unconcernedly she sets
Her hair in trim and pulls a cube
Of chocolate from her leather bag
Sucks it, and opes her morning rag,
And never for my fair face frets
Once we have reached the tube;*

*I love to think her hot despatch,
The fury of her Bacchant speed,
Is due to love, and not to this,
That well she knows if she should miss
The train I usually catch
She must be late indeed.*

E. V. K. (*Evoe*)

The marriage between the Balkan Allies being at an end, the Powers have decided to keep the ring. (16.6.13.)

OUR ANNUAL MASSACRE

Major Hertingfordbury telegraphed: 'Delighted. Will 1000 cartridges be enough?'

To which I replied: 'Thanks very much. Will last me nicely for season.'

Jim sent a post card: 'Right. Suppose it's going to be like last year. Lunch at 1.0?'

The weather was excellent. So was the lunch. I pointed out that they should make the most of what might prove easily the best feature of the day, and we got off about 2.30 p.m. Jarge, the gardener, scraped his boots on a spade, slung the potato-sack—I should say, game-bag—over his shoulder, whistled to Spider, and followed us as soon as his pipe was well alight. Jim stared at the dog in an extremely offensive manner, but said nothing.

Our Annual Massacre

Any idea of walking the rough field in line for a rabbit was frustrated by the spaniel. I had left strict orders for him to be taken for a long walk in the morning and, if possible, to be thoroughly tired out; but the brute had kept a good bit in hand, and we were all well blown before we got him on a lead. This delay gave time for a maid from the house to catch us up with the news that the men had finished cleaning out the ashpit and would like to see the master before they went. I sent a verbal honorarium, pulled the shoot together, and started off again. We spread out through the allotments, the occupants courteously ceasing work to note our passage, and entered the stubble.

There was a great deal of stubble, acres and acres of it, with only one precious patch of roots into which we hoped to chivvy the birds—when found. We walked and walked; had a breather; walked again, and at last came upon them. A covey of thirteen, all full-feathered in the wing, strong in the leg and keen-eyed. Unluckily they found us a fraction of a second sooner than we did them and hopped over a hedge. We nipped round and chivvied cautiously up wind. I was afraid that Spider's breathing as he bore on the leash would put them up. We breasted rising ground and saw them. They saw us, too, and began running towards the station sidings, where we had lost them last time. Jim and I doubled back and round to cut them off. An engine shrieked and the birds got up wide to swing round behind us . . . down with a turn of wing in the far meadow. The first chivvy was a failure.

At this point Major Hertingfordbury came up and asked whether we intended driving at all, as, if not, his man could take his second gun and his stick back to the house and see to a few details on the car. Jim said the birds were a bit wild, but how would it be now to send Jarge well round behind them, casual like, to push 'em back on to our ground, we keeping low in the ditch? Jarge said that, knowing Grierson's cowman, he thought it might be done and that without offence, if anyone would take on Spider for a bit and the light held up.

It worked all right. The covey winded him the moment he crept under the stile into the meadow; they seemed thoroughly roused

Our Annual Massacre

now and got up squawking their loudest. They made a wide circle, shied at the sidings, and finally settled in the roots. It was the moment of the afternoon. Jarge returned breathless and beaming. There was no time to shake hands. We gave Spider back to him; then, the Major in the centre, Jim and I on the flanks, pale, grim, and at the ready, we stole up. The swedes were high, our hopes higher. . . .

I still think we might have got them but for sheer bad luck. Jarge trod on a rabbit, hit at it with his stick, and missed it. The spaniel barked himself free and plunged into the chase with all the pent-up ardour of the last two hours. His idea seemed to be that if he only jumped high enough and came down hard enough, listening for a moment between whiles, he might stun something before it could escape. Like a porpoise at play, he leaped on before our outraged eyes and raucous voices. Well out of shot, sudden as pantomime demons, the birds rose around him. Far down the valley they skimmed—were seen as specks against the setting sun as they rose to the river . . . then no more.

We filled our pipes and walked home in silence. As I stopped behind to close the gate there was a pattering of feet, and out of the darkness came Spider. In his mouth was a rabbit. It just saved us from a blank day.

S. E. W.

Mrs. Pankhurst is now undergoing a rest cure in France. We understand she prefers this to arrest cure in England. (17.9.13.)

SHOULD AN AUTHOR TELL?

It was a memorable morning on which I found myself in the waiting-room of Mr. Silas K. Joshfeller's Variety Agency. Again and again I had assured myself that, if one parson could wake up the music-hall world with a problem sketch, there was no reason on earth why another member of the Church should not meet with almost equal success. So that my natural trepidation was leavened by a measure

Should an Author Tell?

of self-confidence. And yet I had an uneasy feeling that the little collection of music-hall artistes saw me coming—in the slang sense. Two men especially I singled out, and I could have sworn that I at once became the subject of their whispered conversation. One of these I took to be an American. He had the usual sartorial features, including a low-crowned felt hat, a suit not quite as broad as long, and a pair of indescribable boots. His companion was a big Irishman, and appeared to be a member of the hatless brigade. I remember thinking at the time that any man with such very musical hair could well afford to dispense with head covering.

With my wideawake and the book of my sketch in one hand I was just about to tap on the door marked 'Private' with the other, when the American called out politely:

'Say, excuse me, I think you'll find Mr. Joshfeller's busy just now.'

'Oh, thank you,' I said, taking a step in the speaker's direction and realising that I had committed something approaching a breach of etiquette. 'How thoughtless of me,' I went on, setting out to be friendly. 'Of course, all you ladies and gentlemen are also waiting for an interview.'

'Waal, he's naat an easy man to see,' replied the American. 'I should say a variety agent is somethin' like your Aarchbishop of Canterbury to git right hold of.'

'Er—yes. With regard to the Archbishop,' I said, 'I have never had the pleasure. But I've no doubt it's an apt comparison. Perhaps you could tell me if they deal in sketches here?'

'I could naat. Sketches are naat in my line. I'm a comedian. But see here. What is this sketch you've gaat? Is it sensational, cahmedy, or what?'

'Oh, it's—it's a problem sketch.'

'Is ut funny?' asked the Irishman.

'Oh no. Quite serious,' I said. Here was an opportunity of gaining an unbiassed opinion, and, encouraged by their interest, I showed them the script and related the story in a few words.

'Sir,' said the American, when I had finished, 'that show would cause a riot on a cannibal island.'

Should an Author Tell?

'Ye'll be afther wantin' a fortune for ut?' asked the Irishman.

'Oh no. Quite a modest sum would content me,' I said. 'But I'm very gratified to think you like the idea.'

'I'm thinking ut'll revolutionise the music-halls,' said the Irishman. 'Ye'll want to use great caution the way ye dispose of ut.'

'Yes, Sir!' added the American. 'And listen here. I caan't let a man of your cloth rush into vaudeville without a word of preparation, and without tellin' you that there's some store of disillusionment waitin' for any stranger. All around you'll find things are unreal. You'll see Hindoos that are white men, Chinese that are Yanks, comedians that caan't make you laaf, and angelic-lookin' women that are naat. For instance, if you've weighed me up at all you guess I'm Amurrican. Sir, you think I'm a genuine Yank. Waal, I'm naat. I was born in Brixton, and never been out o' this country. But I knows what pays. Now you caan't tell me you ain't shocked at that. Is it not deception? Do you, as a cloirgyman, think it's right?'

'The question you put me is a difficult one,' I answered after a moment's thought. 'I have come here to find an opening for my sketch, and I realise that if I join the ranks of your profession I must conform to its customs. On the whole, I am inclined to take a rather broad-minded view. Perhaps if I myself were in any way connected with the Church—but, as a matter of fact, I'm not.'

The Brixton-American burst into a roar of laughter at this statement. The Irishman merely smiled a peculiar smile and nodded his head. I somehow felt very elated. It was as if I had already proved my worth in another sphere. The only tiny midge in my ointment was the thought that the Brixton-American combination rather tended to detract from the originality of my own enterprise.

'You see,' I went on, trying to speak with indifference, 'if a real parson can do this kind of thing, and cause a public sensation with the help of his clerical position, there seems to be no reason why a bogus one should fail. And I have no doubt that the sight of a clergyman will considerably impress a man of the variety agent type. Now don't you, as music-hall artists, consider my idea rather ingenious? Don't you think that, compared with the ordinary ruse, it savours of originality?'

Should an Author Tell?

'Oh, say, I think it's cute,' said the Brixton-American, and laughed again.

'Shpeakin' for meself,' remarked the Irishman, the lines about his mouth hardening in a quite unaccountable manner, 'I'll admit that yer cunning does not appeal to me. There's deception *and* deception. And ut's the public, and not the egepts, that ye've got to deceive. Maybe if I was a music-hall artiste—but I'm not. I'm an agent. Me name's Silas K. Joshfeller.'

'Really?' I said. 'I hope you will forgive my unfortunate intentions towards yourself.'

'Ach! Your intintions and my idinthity don't matther at all at all. Ut's your claim to one shpark of originality that dhrives me shtark ravin' mad. You and your rotten whiskered sketch and your pantomime parson make-up. Originality, begorra! Why, you're the tenth sham priest that's afther comin' up here wid sketches the last month.'

A. G. L.

The Emperor Menelik has died again. He never quite rallied from his previous deaths. (24.12.13.)

THE LESSON

I was showing Celia a few fancy strokes on the billiard table. The other members of the house-party were in the library, learning their parts for some approaching theatricals—that is to say, they were sitting round the fire and saying to each other, 'This *is* a rotten play.' We had been offered the position of auditors to several of the company, but we were going to see *Parsifal* on the next day, and I was afraid that the constant excitement would be bad for Celia.

'Why don't you ask me to play with you?' she asked. 'You never teach me anything.'

'There's ingratitude. Why, I gave you your first lesson at golf only last Thursday.'

'So you did. I know golf. Now show me billiards.'

The Lesson

I looked at my watch.

'We've only twenty minutes. I'll play you thirty up.'

'Right-o. What do you give me—a ball or a bisque or what?'

'I can't spare you a ball, I'm afraid. I shall want all three when I get going. You may have fifteen start, and I'll tell you what to do.'

'Well, what do I do first?'

'Select a cue.'

She went over to the rack and inspected them.

'This seems to be a nice brown one. Now then, you begin.'

'Celia, you've got the half-butt. Put it back and take a younger one.'

'I thought it seemed taller than the others.' She took another.

'How's this? Good. Then off you go.'

'Will you be spot or plain?' I said, chalking my cue.

'Does it matter?'

'Not very much. They're both the same shape.'

'Then what's the difference?'

'Well, one is more spotted than the other.'

'Then I'll be less spotted.'

I went to the table.

'I think', I said, 'I'll try and screw in off the red.' (I did this once by accident and I've always wanted to do it again.) 'Or perhaps', I corrected myself, as soon as the ball had left me, 'I had better give a safety miss.'

I did. My ball avoided the red and came swiftly back into the left-hand bottom pocket.

'That's three to you,' I said without enthusiasm.

Celia seemed surprised.

'But I haven't begun yet,' she said. 'Well, I suppose you know the rules, but it seems funny. What would you like me to do?'

'Well, there isn't much on. You'd better just try and hit the red ball.'

'Right.' She leant over the table and took long and careful aim. I held my breath. . . . Still she aimed. . . . Then, keeping her chin on the cue, she slowly turned her head and looked up at me with a thoughtful expression.

The Lesson

'Oughtn't there to be three balls on the table?' she said, wrinkling her forehead.

'No,' I answered shortly.

'But why not?'

'Because I went down by mistake.'

'But you said that when you got going you wanted—— I can't argue bending down like this.' She raised herself slowly. 'You said—— Oh, all right, I expect you know. Anyhow, I *have* scored some already, haven't I?'

'Yes. You're eighteen to my nothing.'

'Yes. Well, now I shall have to aim all over again.' She bent slowly over her cue. 'Does it matter where I hit the red?'

'Not much. As long as you hit it on the red part.'

She hit it hard on the side, and both balls came into baulk.

'Too good,' I said.

'Does either of us get anything for it?'

'No.' The red and the white were close together, and I went up the table and down again on the off chance of a cannon. I misjudged it, however.

'That's three to you,' I said stiffly, as I took my ball out of the right-hand bottom pocket. 'Twenty-one to nothing.'

'Funny how I'm doing all the scoring,' said Celia meditatively. 'And I've practically never played before. I shall hit the red hard now and see what happens to it.'

She hit, and the red coursed madly about the table, coming to rest near the top right-hand pocket and close to the cushion. With a forcing shot I could get in.

'This will want a lot of chalk,' I said pleasantly to Celia, and gave it plenty. Then I let fly. . . .

'Why did that want a lot of chalk?' said Celia with interest.

I went to the fireplace and picked my ball out of the fender.

'That's three to you,' I said coldly. 'Twenty-four to nothing.'

'Am I winning?'

'You're leading,' I explained. 'Only, you see, I may make a twenty at any moment.'

The Lesson

'Oh!' She thought this over. 'Well, I may make my three at any moment.'

She chalked her cue and went over to her ball.

'What shall I do?'

'Just touch the red on the right-hand side,' I said, 'and you'll go into the pocket.'

'The *right*-hand side? Do you mean *my* right-hand side, or the ball's?'

'The right-hand side of the ball, of course; that is to say, the side opposite your right hand.'

'But its right-hand side is opposite my *left* hand, if the ball is facing this way.'

'Take it', I said wearily, 'that the ball has its back to you.'

'How rude of it,' said Celia, and hit it on the left-hand side, and sank it. 'Was that what you meant?'

'Well . . . it's another way of doing it.'

'I thought it was. What do I give you for that?'

'*You* get three.'

'Oh, I thought the other person always got the marks. I know the last three times——'

'Go on,' I said freezingly. 'You have another turn.'

'Oh, is it like rounders?'

'Something. Go on, there's a dear. It's getting late.'

She went, and left the red over the middle pocket.

'A-ha!' I said. I found a nice place in the 'D' for my ball. 'Now then. This is the Grey stroke, you know.'

I suppose I was nervous. Anyhow, I just nicked the red ball gently on the wrong side and left it hanging over the pocket. The white travelled slowly up the table.

'Why is that called the Grey stroke?' asked Celia with great interest.

'Because once, when Sir Edward Grey was playing the German Ambassador—but it's rather a long story; I'll tell you another time.'

'Oh! Well, anyhow, did the German Ambassador get anything for it?'

'No.'

The Lesson

'Then I suppose I don't. Bother.'

'But you've only got to knock the red in for game.'

'Oh! . . . There, what's that?'

'That's a miscue. I get one.'

'Oh! . . . Oh, well,' she added magnanimously, 'I'm glad you've started scoring. It will make it more interesting for you.'

There was just room to creep in off the red, leaving it still over the pocket. With Celia's ball nicely over the other pocket there was a chance of my twenty break. 'Let's see,' I said, 'how many do I want?'

'Twenty-nine,' replied Celia.

'Ah,' I said . . . and I crept in.

'That's three to you,' I said icily. 'Game.'

A. A. M.

OUR LITERARY ADVICE DEPARTMENT

Candid advice given to the literary aspirant on easy terms by an old journalist. His fame is world-wide, but he prefers to be known as The Old Nib. Anyone sending him threatening letters will be prosecuted.

Frankly, LANCELOT, your *Passionate Pangs*; or, *Heart Throbs of a Retired Government Clerk*, will never bring you in a large income. You say friends have praised them highly, and you point out that Tennyson had to wait years for recognition. Well, you must do the same. You could not have a better precedent.

You have a strong grasp of a situation, BENJAMIN, and the scene where *Uncle Henry* slips on the butter slide is quite thrilling. But you must compress a little and avoid certain faults of style. 'She hove a sigh' is wrong; and I do not like 'Pshaw, he *shouted*'; I do not think it could be done. I tried myself in my bath and swallowed a lot of soapy water. Pray be more careful.

I certainly like to hear from such an enthusiastic reader as WIGWAM. His idea of going to a fancy-dress ball dressed in a num-

Our Literary Advice Department

ber of old copies of *Wopple's Weekly* is excellent and, if they let him in, ought to be a great success. I hope he wins the hair comb. As to his verses I have often seen worse. With a rhyming dictionary (for rhyming) and an ordinary one (for spelling) WIGWAM should go far.

ANGELINA's poem shows a nice domestic feeling which I appreciate. In these days of Suffragettes it is not every authoress who will say:

*'I like to see a familiar face
And I think home is a beautiful place.'*

But though 'mother', as she says, is a very beautiful word it does not rhyme with 'forever'. 'Other', 'brother', and 'smother' are the rhymes that I always recommend.

LEONIDAS has made a great improvement since I had to speak to him so severely last spring. *Sly Sarah* is quite a clever tale, and before very long LEONIDAS will find himself writing for *Soapy Bits* and papers of that calibre. Of this I am sure. His characterisation is strong, his style is redolent of *bravura* and his general atmosphere is *fortissimo*. The character of the archdeacon might be improved; indeed, if LEONIDAS is going to send it to *The Diocesan Monthly*, I should say it must be improved. Why should he slap Sarah's face? No reason is given for this, and it is surely a very questionable action. Human nature may be human nature, but archdeacons are archdeacons. By the way, there is only one *l* in spoonful.

HENRY must be careful. This is the third time he has sent me his epic. There are limits.

There is not much demand for tales of this description, HOPEFUL. But as you say you like writing them I do not see who is to prevent you. If you can get the permission of the local authorities by all means give a reading at the Home for the Half-Witted.

I have no doubt CLAPHAM ROVER means well, but he has a lot to learn. There are no events of any kind in the three tales he sends me. The only thing that ever happens is that the hero is kicked downstairs. Even then he lies prostrate in the hall for two days. Surely the maids might have swept him up. CLAPHAM ROVER must remember the great words of Demosthenes when he swallowed a pebble on

Our Literary Advice Department

the sea beach: 'Action, action, and again action'. He was thinking of lawyers, of course, but his words have a lesson for us all.

INGENUOUS is the exact opposite of CLAPHAM ROVER. I rise from his tale an absolute wreck. 'Splash, she was in the river'; 'plonk, he was on the floor'; 'whiz, a bullet shot past him'. INGENUOUS must really go more quietly and make a little less noise. Why not write a few essays on some of our lesser-known female didactic writers, or some such subjects as 'People one is surprised to hear that Dr. Johnson never met'? It would do him a lot of good. But above all he must study that master of Quietism, the incomparable author of *The Woman's Touch*, *The Silent Preacher*, *Through a College Key-hole*.

PARSIFAL has pained me very much. He sent me a long poem, and after I had given him a very detailed criticism I discovered that he had simply copied out a poem of Wordsworth's familiar to us all from our earliest childhood. I have lost his address, so I cannot tell him privately what I think of him, but it was a dirty trick.

CIUDAD RODRIGO (I don't know why he calls himself that; he writes from Balham) sends me an essay on George Borrow. It follows with great fidelity the line of established fact, never deviating into the unknown. After reading it I felt that I did not want to hear any more about George Borrow for a long time.

ARRIÈRE PENSÉE, TOOTLES, PONGO and HUGGING: see answer to CIUDAD RODRIGO.

I did an injustice to PARNASSIAN in my answer to him last week. Owing to a misprint I was made to say that 'his poems were written' (which they were not, but typed, and very excellently typed too). What I meant to say was that his poems were rotten. Sorry.

C. O. F.



The Gaby Deslys tradition? Miss Lottie Venne is appearing at the Criterion in *A Pair of Silk Stockings* and Miss Mary Moore is touring the provinces in *Mrs. Gorrings Necklace*. (4.3.14.)

Con CON

*Con was the conjurer of the king
Ere the coming of Padraig Mor,
And a wand he had, and a golden ring,
And a five-prong crown he wore;
And his robe was trimmed with minever—
His robe of the royal blue,
For Con was the wonderful conjurer
In the days when the tricks were new.*

*He could pick a rabbit from out of a poke
Where never had rabbit lain;
He could pulp your watch like an egg's red yoke
And give it you whole again;
And the king he laughed 'Ha-ha' he laughed,
Till they thumped on his back anon;
And the other magicians went dancing daft
To see the magic of Con.*

*Now Con he climbed on a moonbeam grey
To the dusk of the god's great shop,
And he stole the Elixir of Life away,
And he drank it every drop;
He poured the draught in a golden cup
On a wonderful day that's gone,
And he swilled it round and he tossed it up,
And that was the curse of Con.*

*And the old king died at ninety-six
And his son he reigned instead;
But Con he conjured the same old tricks,
And his hair crow-black on his head;
And the new king died, and another king,
And another king after he,
But Con went on with his conjuring
The same as it used to be.*

Con

*When the fifth king came (he was long of limb
And a hasty man) he swore,
When Con he conjured his tricks for him,
And he kicked Con through the door;
For that's in the songs the minstrels sung,
And thus is the story told,
For 'Con,' said the king, 'you're none so young,
And your tricks are plaguy old!'*

*Now Con he tramps from shire to shire,
And he must till the crack of doom;
He takes the road in the dust and mire,
And he sleeps in the windy broom;
He's no address and he's no abode,
And his jacket's the worse o' wear;
And I've met him once on the Portsmouth Road,
And once at a Wicklow fair.*

*When the roundabouts and the swings are slow
And a conjuring chap draws near,
And there's nothing about his mug to show
That it's seen five thousand year
(For that's the way that the songs were sung,
And thus is the story told),
You'll know it's Con and he's none so young
For his tricks are plaguy old.*

P. R. C.

A doctor declares that the sting of a bee is a most effective cure for both rheumatism and sciatica. It is also an infallible cure for inertia. (18.3.14.)

The Sluggard

THE SLUGGARD

My Uncle James, whose memoirs I am now preparing for publication, was a many-sided man; but his chief characteristic, I am inclined to think, was the indomitable resolution with which, disregarding hints, entreaties and even direct abuse, he would lie in bed of a morning. I have seen the domestic staff of his hostess day after day manœuvring restlessly in the passage outside his room, doing all those things which women do who wish to rout a man out of bed without moving Uncle James an inch. Footsteps might patter outside his door; voices might call one to the other; knuckles might rap the panels; relays of shaving-water might be dumped on his washstand; but devil a bit would Uncle James budge, till finally the enemy, giving in, would bring him his breakfast in bed. Then, after a leisurely cigar, he would at last rise and, having dressed himself with care, come downstairs and be the ray of sunshine about the home.

For many years I was accustomed to look on Uncle James as a mere sluggard. I pictured ants raising their antennæ scornfully at the sight of him. I was to learn that not sloth but a deep purpose dictated his movements, or his lack of movement.

‘My boy,’ said Uncle James, ‘more evil is wrought by early rising than by want of thought. Happy homes are broken up by it. Why do men leave charming wives and run away with quite unattractive adventuresses? Because good women always get up early. Bad women, on the other hand, invariably rise late. To prize a man out of bed at some absurd hour like nine-thirty is to court disaster. To take my own case, when I first wake in the morning my mind is one welter of unkindly thoughts. I think of all the men who owe me money, and hate them. I review the regiment of women who have refused to marry me, and loathe them. I meditate on my faithful dog, Ponto, and wish that I had kicked him overnight. To introduce me to the human race at that moment would be to let loose a scourge upon society. But what a difference after I have lain in bed looking at the ceiling for an hour or so. The milk of human kindness comes surging back into me like a tidal wave. I love my species. Give me a bit of breakfast then, and let me enjoy a quiet

The Sluggard

meditative smoke, and I am a pleasure to all with whom I come into contact.'

He settled himself more comfortably upon the pillows and listened luxuriously for a moment to the sound of rushing housemaids in the passage.

'Late rising saved my life once,' he said. 'Pass me my tobacco pouch.'

He lit his pipe and expelled a cloud of smoke.

'It was when I was in South America. There was the usual revolution in the Republic which I had visited in my search for concessions, and, after due consideration, I threw in my lot with the revolutionary party. It is usually a sound move, for on these occasions the revolutionists have generally corrupted the standing army, and they win before the other side has time to re-corrupt it at a higher figure. In South America, thrice armed is he who has his quarrel just, but six times he who gets his bribe in fust. On the occasion of which I speak, however, a hitch was caused by the fact of another party revolting against the revolutionists while they were revolting against the revolutionary party which had just upset the existing Government. Everything is very complicated in those parts. You will remember that the tango came from there.

'Well, the long and the short of it was that I was captured and condemned to be shot. I need not go into my emotions at the time. Suffice it to say that I was led out and placed with my back against an adobe wall. The firing-party raised their rifles.

'It was a glorious morning. The sun was high in a cloudless sky. Everywhere sounded the gay rattle of the rattlesnake and the mellow chirrup of the hydrophobia-skunk and the gila monster. It vexed me to think that I was so soon to leave so peaceful a scene.

'And then suddenly it flashed upon me that there had been a serious mistake.

'"Wait!" I called.

'"What's the matter now?" asked the leader of the firing-squad.

'"Matter?" I said. "Look at the sun. The court martial distinctly said that I was to be shot at sunrise. Do you call this sunrise? It must be nearly lunch time."

The Sluggard

"It's not our fault," said the firing-party. "We came to your cell all right, but you wouldn't get up. You told us to leave it on the mat."

I did remember then having heard someone fussing about outside my cell door.

"That's neither here nor there," I said firmly. "It was your business to shoot me at sunrise, and you haven't done it. I claim a retrial on a technicality."

Well, they stormed and blustered, but I was adamant; and in the end they had to take me back to my cell to be tried again. I was condemned to be shot at sunrise next morning, and they went to the trouble of giving me an alarm clock and setting it for 3 a.m.

But at about eleven o'clock that night there was another revolution. Some revolutionaries revolted against the revolutionaries who had revolted against the revolutionaries who had revolted against the Government, and, having re-re-corrupted the standing army, they swept all before them, and at about midnight I was set free. I recall that the new President kissed me on both cheeks and called me the saviour of his country. Poor fellow, there was another revolution next day, and, being a confirmed early riser, he got up in time to be shot at sunrise.'

Uncle James sighed, possibly with regret, but more probably with happiness, for at this moment they brought in his breakfast.

P. G. W.

A correspondent is surprised to learn that the day devoted to collections for charities connected with the Variety Stage is known as 'Tag Day'. He had always imagined that 'Tag Day' was a toast on German war vessels. (17.6.14.)

The Logic of Ententes

THE LOGIC OF ENTENTES

(Lines composed on what looks like the eve of a general European war; and designed to represent the views of an average British patriot.)

To Servia.

*You have won whatever of fame it brings
To have murdered a King and the heir of Kings;
And it well may be that your sovereign pride
Chafes at a touch of its tender hide;
But why should I follow your fighting-line
For a matter that's no concern of mine?*

To Austria.

*You may, if you like, elect to curb
The dark designs of the dubious Serb,
And to close your Emperor's days in strife—
A tragic end to a tragic life;
But why in the world should I stand to lose
By your bellicose taste for Balkan coups?*

To Russia.

*No doubt the natural course for you
Is to bid the Austrian bird 'Go to!'
He can't be suffered to spoil your dream
Of a beautiful Pan-Slavonic scheme;
But Britons can never be Slavs, you see,
So what has your case to do with me?*

*But since Another if you insist,
Will be cutting in with his mailed fist,
I shall be asked to a general scrap
All over the European map,
Dragged into somebody else's war,
For that's what a double entente is for.*

The Logic of Ententes

*Well, if I must, I shall have to fight
For the love of a bounding Balkanite;
But what a tactless choice of time,
When the bathing season is at its prime!
And how I should hate to miss my chance
Of wallowing off the coast of France!*

O. S.

A motor-bus ran into a Gray's Inn Road barber's shop last week. Three customers had a close shave. (22.7.14.)

THE NEW NEWS

While cordially endorsing all the deserved tributes that have lately been paid to the tact and loyalty of our daily Press, we venture to express a hope that the practice of printing every kind of contradictory war report will not become of universal application to other forms of intelligence.

Imagine, for example, being confronted with this kind of thing in the Cricket specials:—

KENT v. LANCASHIRE

THE GREAT MATCH BEGUN

A telegram from Canterbury, dated 11 a.m., Aug. 18th, states that the great match has actually begun. No details are given.

AMAZING LANCASTRIAN VICTORY

Rumour's Agency learns that the resistance of Kent has everywhere been entirely overcome; no fewer than forty-three of the home side have been dismissed for sixteen runs. Twenty-nine wickets fell before lunch.

Maidstone, Aug. 19. (Delayed in transmission.) The team has arrived in Canterbury. Captain Troughton, in a stirring address,

The New News

pointed out that hostilities had been forced upon the county, which however would not be found unprepared. The greatest enthusiasm prevails among the team, who are in capital health. Woolley especially was never in better form.

STARTLING REPORT

A private telegram received in Liverpool states that Sharp took seventeen wickets for no runs in eleven minutes. Up to the time of going to press this had not been officially confirmed.

Dover.—No credence is attached here to the reported success of Lancashire. It is pointed out that in any case the figures given must be greatly over-estimated, not more than eleven men being employed on either side. Most probably the casualties include both umpires and spectators, and these losses would have no real effect on the game.

Manchester.—It is confirmed here that Woolley has resigned.

Canterbury, noon, Aug. 18. (From our Special Correspondent.)—At last I am able to send you definite information. Amidst a scene of breathless enthusiasm the two Captains prepared to toss. A roar of cheering soon afterwards proclaimed that the coin had declared in favour of —

(Message breaks off here and has evidently been censored.)

Folkestone unofficial wires state that at lunch the scores stood—Kent all out 463; Lancashire 14 for 2 wickets (both taken by Woolley).

STOP PRESS

The Press Bureau have just issued a statement that no play has yet been possible in the Kent v. Lancashire match on account of rain.

A. E.

A Scotsman wishes it to be known how glad he is to see that the French have been getting their Aisne back. (30.9.14.)

A Candidate for the Force

A CANDIDATE FOR THE FORCE

'I want to enrol myself as a Special Constable,' I said to the man in mufti behind the desk.

'Well, don't let me stop you,' he remarked. 'The Police Station is next door. This is a steam laundry.'

A minute later I began again:—

'I want to enrol myself as Steam Laund—— that is to say, as a Special Constable.'

—'Certainly, Sir,' said the Inspector in charge. 'Your name and address?'

I opened my cigarette case and placed a card on the desk.

'The name of the house is pronounced *Song Soocce*,' I said; 'not, as spelt, Sans Souci.'

The Inspector handed me back the card. It was a cigarette-picture representing the proper method of bandaging a displaced knee-cap. I rectified the error, and he entered the information in a book.

'I must ask if you are a British subject?' he inquired.

'You might almost describe me as super-British,' I replied. 'There is a tradition in my family that my ancestors were on Hastings Pier when the Conqueror arrived.'

'Thank you. That will be all.'

'You don't want me to give references, one of which must be a clergyman or a J.P.? You don't require me to state previous experience, if any, or any details of that sort?'

'Oh, no,' he answered. 'That'll be all right. You are no doubt familiar with squad drill?'

'Splendid! I had no idea it was used in the Force.'

'Right turn—left turn—about turn—form fours—and so on?'

'I beg your pardon,' I said, 'but what did you call that?'

'Squad drill, Sir.'

'O-o-h! I thought you said "quadrille". But I know the turns. Right turn, I turn to the right; left turn, I turn to the left; about turn, I turn just about, but not quite; form fours, I form—excuse me, but how does *one* man form fours?'

'There will, of course, be others,' replied the Inspector. 'You'll

A Candidate for the Force

soon pick it up. And please state at what hours of the day you would be prepared to take duty.'

'Well,' I said, 'I've practically nothing to do from the time I get up—half-past ten—until midday. I could also manage to spare half an hour between afternoon tea and dinner. And I could just drop in here about eleven at night to see if things were going along all right. Now, if you'll kindly fetch me a bull's-eye lantern, a life-preserver, a bullet-proof tunic, some indiarubber boots, a revolver, and a letter of introduction to some of the most skilful cooks in the neighbourhood I can put in one crowded hour of joyous life before I'm due on the links.'

'Just a moment,' said the Inspector. 'I don't want to discourage you, but kindly cast your eye over these paragraphs'; and he handed me a printed circular. 'You will see that it will be necessary for you to perform four consecutive hours' duty.'

'Good heavens!' I exclaimed, 'I don't think I shall be able to manage that. I'm in the middle of an important jigsaw; I'm expecting a new motor-car to arrive any minute; and I have a slight head cold. However, if my country calls me, I will see what can be arranged.'

I noticed the Inspector's look of admiration at my bulldog resolution, so to hide my blushes I perused the circular.

'I see', I said, 'that we are each supplied with "one armlet". What's an armlet?'

'A badge that goes round your arm.'

'Of course! How stupid of me! Just like a bracelet goes round one's—no, that won't do. Just like a gimlet goes—no, that doesn't either. I can't think of a simile, but I quite understand. Then we have "one whistle". What's that for? To whistle on if I feel lonely?'

'To summon assistance if you should require it.'

'I have an idea that my whistle will be overworked. Shall I be able to get a new one when the original's worn out?'

The Inspector thought there would be no difficulty in my getting re-whistled.

'"One truncheon",' I continued. 'That, of course, is to trunch with. One truncheon, though, seems rather niggardly. I should

A Candidate for the Force

prefer two, one in each hand. "One note-book"—is that for autographs and original contributions from my brother Specials?

'For noting names and addresses and details of cases,' explained the Inspector. 'For instance, if, when on duty, you saw Jack Johnson committing a breach of the peace you would——'

'Blow my whistle hard——'

'Certainly not. You would take his name and address and note it down.'

'And if he refused it I could then whistle for help?'

'No, you would at once arrest him.'

'What's the earliest possible moment at which it would be etiquette to blow my whistle?'

'When he offered resistance. Then you could whistle.'

'No, I couldn't,' I said, 'not unless my equipment included one pair of bellows. Do you mean to tell me that I should be expected to arrest a man of infinitely superior physique to my own with no other weapons than one armlet, one whistle, one truncheon and one note-book? Surely I should be allowed to run for the Mayor and get him to read the Riot Act? If not, I can only say a policeman's lot is——'

'Not a happy one?' put in the Inspector.

'I was going to say a policeman's lot is a lot too much. Would you kindly cross my name off your list?'

'I crossed it off some minutes ago,' replied the Inspector.

A. S.

Die Post, in a reference to our million recruits, says, 'Mere figures will not frighten us.' Frankly, some of the figures of the stout Landwehr men frighten *us*. (16.12.14.)

TOMMY BROWN, AUCTIONEER

Tommy Brown knows all about India. You see, his father served out there, and that is how Tommy knows so much. He says that

Tommy Brown, Auctioneer

everybody in India has to have a bath once a year in the Ganges, and that there is a delta at the mouth of the Ganges as big as Ireland.

Tommy says it is very hot in the shade in India, but you needn't walk in the shade unless you like. He showed me how an idol looked—it is like when you come to the castor oil under the ginger wine.

But it is about the Indian troops that I want to tell you. Tommy was very pleased when they came, because he knows all about them. He likes the Gherkins best, he says, because they are so hardy. Tommy says the Gherkins can hold their breath for five minutes without going red in the face, and that's why they can fight so well.

He says they never want anything to eat, because they have a kind of a twig that they chew, and then all they have to do is to keep tightening their belts. Tommy gave me some of the twig they chew; it tasted like cabbage. I didn't want anything more to eat all that day. Tommy had some himself; he says now he doesn't think it was the right kind of twig. Tommy told me that the Gherkins' mothers teach them to prowl when they are very young, and that they are always prowling. Tommy showed me how to prowl. You can lie flat on your stomach, and wriggle about as if you were swimming. He says it makes the Gherkins very hardy. They always do it, Tommy says, even when they have a half-holiday. To do it properly you have to breathe through the back of your throat and move your ears.

When the King went to India, Tommy says he was surprised at the Gherkins. They used to prowl before him, and he was very glad. He said they were very hardy.

Tommy says they are very brave because they don't know what fear is; his father told him that. He says no one has ever seen a Gherkin blub; if they have to, they go and do it somewhere else.

There is only one way you can kill them. Tommy knows the way, but he daren't tell anyone.

Tommy says that when they want to kill a man they prowl after him for five miles, and then come back as silently as they went. He says it is no good shooting at them, because they are not there.

He showed me how they killed people. They come up behind

Tommy Brown, Auctioneer

you and catch you round the neck, and it's no good saying, 'Shut up', because they don't understand English; then you make a noise like gargling for sore throats, and that's how they know you are dead. It makes the people very angry, Tommy says.

If they take a dislike to anyone, you are sure to get killed, because they prowl after you until they do. And when you come to look at the dead man, you can see he has died a horrible death, and if you turn him over there isn't a mark on him. You see, he didn't hear them coming. That's what Tommy Brown told me.

Tommy says a Gherkin once saved his father's life by killing a snake. Tommy's father gave the Gherkin a lot of money to put in his pocket, but he wouldn't take it. The Gherkins don't have pockets, Tommy says.

Tommy says that if two Germans stood back to back to see who was the taller, a Gherkin could cut through both of them with his two-handled knife, and it would be done so quickly that neither of the Germans would know which was killed first. They do it by practice, Tommy told me. They always use two-handled knives, so that when they are tired with using one handle they can use the other.

You can never catch a Gherkin, because on the slightest movement in the bushes they throw a rope up into the air and climb up it, then they pull the rope up after them.

Tommy says that Gherkins wear turbots on their heads. He says that they wear very few clothes, but they don't catch rheumatism because it is not known there.

When Tommy's mother told him that people were sending presents to the Indian troops we had a meeting about it. We dug a deep trench in Tommy's garden and held the meeting there; Tommy didn't want the Germans to know.

When we had dug the trench Tommy stood at one end, and I had to come up to him and give him the sign we had arranged. You had to move your ears and say 'Gherkin', then you were admitted to the trench. It was because of the German spies.

We decided to get money for the Indian troops by selling Tommy's white rats, and I was to lend Tommy my Jew's harp for a week as my share.

Tommy Brown, Auctioneer

Tommy sold the white rats in the playground after school. He stood on a box near the fence. The man who lives next door thought Tommy was going to climb over into his garden after a ball, and he said to Tommy, 'My steemy friend, you stay where you are.'

Tommy took no notice because his mother said the man had been in India and brought back his liver and Tommy wasn't to listen.

I bid fourpence for the two white rats; we had arranged that in the trench.

Tommy Brown said with lots of scorn, 'Fourpence!'—just like that. Then he said the money was to go to buy things for the Indian troops, and what would they think of fourpence? Old Jones minimus said sixpence when he got his pocket-money on Saturday; then the Head came out to see what the row was about. When Tommy Brown told him all about it, the Head bid half a crown in a loud voice. We cheered, and just then the man who lives next door and who brought his liver home from India shouted out five shillings. Then the Headmaster said ten shillings. Tommy Brown had to clutch hold of the rails. The man who lives next door went red in the neck and bid a sovereign. Jones minimus began to blub when the Head bid two pounds.

The man who had been to India said: 'My steemy Sir, it is no use; I bid four pounds'. I could see old Tommy Brown moving his ears like anything. The Headmaster said: 'The Gurkhas are some of the finest troops in the world'—he meant Gherkins, but he was excited; then he said: 'Five pounds, Tommy White, for the brown rats'. The man who likes liver said something we haven't got to listen to, and then Tommy fell off the box.

'Knocked down at six pounds!' said the Headmaster, laughing; 'we will have one each.' They both gave Tommy Brown three pounds and then shook hands over the fence. Tommy says I needn't lend him my Jew's harp now.

W. St. G. D.

Reply to those who think it absurd to take precautions against invasion: It's the Hun-expected that always happens. (16.12.14.)

On the Spy Trail

ON THE SPY TRAIL

Jimmy had been saving up his pocket-money and his mother had begun to get rather anxious; she thought he must be sickening for something.

He was. It was for a dog, any dog, but preferably a very fierce bloodhound. He had already bought a chain; he had to have that because the dog he was going to buy would have to be held in by main force; it would have to be restrained.

But he didn't have to buy one after all; he had one transferred to him.

You see Jimmy was helping at a kind of bazaar in aid of the Belgian Refugees Fund. He had volunteered to help with the refreshment stall. There is a lot of work about a refreshment stall, Jimmy says. His work made him a bit husky, but he stuck to it and so it stuck to him.

He was very busy explaining the works of a cake when a man came up with something under his arm. It was a raffle. You paid threepence for a ticket, and would the lady like one?

The lady said she already had two tea-cosies at home; but the man explained that it was not a tea-cosy, it was a dog.

A dog! Perhaps a bloodhound! Jimmy trembled with excitement. Only threepence for a ticket, and he had a chance of winning it.

It seemed a faithful dog, Jimmy thought. It had a very good lick, too; it licked a sponge cake off a plate, and would have licked quite a lot more from Jimmy's stall if it had had time.

Jimmy came third in the raffle.

But the man whose ticket won the dog said he didn't care for that kind of breed, by the look of it, and gave way in favour of the next.

The next man said he wasn't taking any shooting this year, and he stood aside. The dog was Jimmy's!

With trembling hands he fastened on the chain—to restrain it. Then he asked the man whose ticket had won the raffle if it was really a *prize* bloodhound.

The man looked at the dog critically, and said it was either a

On the Spy Trail

prize bloodhound or a Scotch haggis; at any rate it was a very rare animal.

Jimmy asked if he would have to have a licence for it, but the man said it would be best to wait and see what it grew into. All good bloodhounds are like that, Jimmy says.

Jimmy ran all the way home; he couldn't run very fast, as the bloodhound tried to slide on its hind legs most of the way, it was so fierce.

Jimmy knows all about bloodhounds, how to train them. He is training his to track down German spies, amongst other things.

He knows a way so that if you say something—well, you don't exactly say it, you do it by putting your tongue into the place where your front teeth came out and then blowing—a really well-trained bloodhound will begin to shiver, and the hair on the back of his neck will go up. You then go and look for someone to help you to pull him off the German's throat, and ask the German his name and address, politely.

Jimmy taught his bloodhound to track clothes by letting it smell at a piece of cloth. It brought him a lot of clothes from nearly a quarter of a mile away. They were not the right clothes though, and Jimmy had to take them back. The woman wanted them—to wash over again, she said. She doesn't like bloodhounds much.

Jimmy says you ought to have the blood of the victim on the cloth.

Jimmy has trained his bloodhound to watch things. It is very good at watching. It watched a cat up a tree all one night, and never left off once: it is very faithful like that. And it bays quite well, without being taught to. It bayed up to four hundred and ten one night, and would have gone past that but a man opened a window and told it not to. He sent it a water-bottle to play with instead.

Jimmy's bloodhound is a splendid fighter. It fought a dog much bigger than itself and nearly choked it. The other dog was trying to swallow it, and Jimmy had to pull his dog out.

Jimmy says he has only once seen his bloodhound really frightened. It was when it followed Jimmy up into his bedroom, and saw itself in the mirror in the wardrobe. Jimmy says it was because it

On the Spy Trail

came upon itself too suddenly. It made it brood a great deal, and Jimmy had to give it a certain herb to reassure it.

Jimmy takes it out every day, searching for German spies. It goes round sniffing everywhere—in hopes. It is a very strong sniffer and full of zeal, and one day it did it.

A man was looking at a shop-window, where they sell sausages and pork pies. He was studying them, Jimmy says. Jimmy says he never would have guessed he was a German spy if his bloodhound hadn't sniffed him out. It walked round the man twice, and in doing so wrapped the chain round the man's legs. Jimmy says it was to cut off his retreat. The man moved backwards and stepped on the bloodhound's toe, and the bloodhound began to bay like anything. Jimmy says it showed the bloodhound was hot upon the scent.

It then sniffed a piece out of the man's trousers.

There was another man there; he was looking on and laughing. He said to Jimmy; 'Pull in, sonny; you've got a bite'.

But he stopped laughing when the German spy tripped up and fell on top of the bloodhound; for the German spy shouted out, 'Ach, Himmel!' The man who was looking on shouted, 'What ho!' and put all the fingers of both hands into his mouth and gave one terrific whistle. The bloodhound held on tightly underneath the German, baying faithfully, till the policeman came and forced them apart. The German spy never said anything to the policeman or to the man or to Jimmy, but it seemed he couldn't say enough to the bloodhound. He kept turning round to say things, as they came into his head, on his way to the police station.

Jimmy asked the German if he could keep the piece of cloth his bloodhound had sniffed out.

Jimmy has made the piece of cloth into a kind of medal with a piece of wire, and has fastened it to the bloodhound's collar. Jimmy says if he gets a lot of pieces of cloth like this he is going to make a patchwork quilt for the bloodhound.

Jimmy's bloodhound is hotter than ever on the trail of German spies.

If you are good you shall hear more of it another time.

W. St. G. D.

The Lonely Soldier

THE LONELY SOLDIER

Darling Delia,—I am in the most lacerating *fix*, and it all comes of my tender heart!

It gets on one's nerves saying good-bye to the boys, and sitting at home doing nothing oneself. For weeks I've been longing for something to do, and at last Lady Anne asked me to join the 'Lonely Soldiers' Consolation League', and of course I jumped. The lonely soldiers send in their names, and they are put in a hat and handed round, and each member writes to her special Lonely once a week, and sends him a parcel once a month.

I haven't come to the parcel stage, but I sent a gushing letter. It was just after the last attack, when they'd been for *days* in the trenches, and their poor dear boots had stuck fast in the mud, and one was strung up to feeling that we'd love them, bless them, *kiss* them, when they came home again! I said so to Ted Johnson (that's my lonely), quoting the refrain of the song in the actual words; I said he must never feel lonely or forgotten, for *I* remembered him, *I* thought of him, *I* looked forward to his return!

What else could one say? You write to them because they are lonely, and if they are lonely you can only cheer them by saying that you remember!

I *spread* myself upon Ted Johnson. And in due time his answer came. Prestwick brought it in with the tea things (we have had no footman since the last Jeames enlisted', and I tore it open, and read it aloud to Ella, too eager to wait even until we were alone. Besides I was rather proud that Prestwick should see that I've been working too.

This was the letter:

'DEAR MISS,—I was glad to hear you missed me and was looking forward to my return. It's a long way to Eaton Gardens and the sweetest girl I know. We are having a deal of rain. With fond love from

Yours truly,

PRIVATE TED JOHNSON.'

'How perfectly *dinkie*!' Ella said. 'Isn't he sweet? Isn't he brave?'

The Lonely Soldier

Isn't he *cheerful*? Wouldn't you love to see him, Flora, and know him in real life?'

Then Prestwick spoke. He was standing with the tea tray in his hand, staring across the room.

'Pardon me, Madam,' he said, 'you *have* seen him! Ted Johnson was our last footman!'

Oh, my Delia! before you correspond with a Lonely Soldier, be warned by me and make sure *who he is*. I have engaged to kiss Jeames on his return; he has sent me his fond love; *and Father has promised to take him back!*

Your distracted Flora.

MRS. V.

Owing to the fact that nearly 250 elementary schools have been utilised for military purposes about 13,000 children have been compelled to take a holiday. Thanks to the splendid patriotic spirit now seeping the country, in no single instance was it necessary to use force. (24.2.15.)

THE WOOL-WINDER

'The Dardanelles', I said, 'are now——'

'I'm sorry I can't attend to the Dardanelles just at present,' said Francesca.

'Why not?' I said. 'Do you take no interest in them?'

'Yes,' she said, 'lots. But at this moment I'm knitting a bed-sock for some frost-bitten soldier, and it's got to be finished to-night.'

'Won't to-morrow do?' I said.

'No,' she said, 'it won't. The whole parcel must go off to-morrow morning to the hospital.'

'Oh, very well,' I said, 'if you won't listen, you won't, and there's an end of it. I only thought you might like to have a little intellectual conversation even while you were knitting. Some people would prefer to have a certain amount of outside intellect thrown into a

The Wool-Winder

bed-sock, especially as I understand that bed-socks have no heels, and are, therefore, not in themselves of the highest interest.'

'This bed-sock,' said Francesca, 'doesn't aim at being interesting; it hopes to be comfortable. So please go on reading your evening paper to yourself. I'm not one of those geniuses who can knit and talk and write letters and read papers all at one and the same time.'

'All right,' I said, 'but when Mrs. Archdale comes into the room I warn you I shall talk to her whether she's knitting or not. I simply insist on telling her about the Dardanelles.'

'And that', said Francesca, 'would be conduct unworthy of a host. But she hasn't brought her knitting with her.'

'How terrible for her,' I said. 'What does it feel like to forget one's knitting?'

At this moment Mrs. Archdale entered the room. She was staying with us for two nights, and, having left her knitting behind, she was for the moment a sort of free lance among women. Now Mrs. Archdale, who is the kindest of women, has two main characteristics. Either she is wanting to help somebody else or she is actually helping somebody else. She came in trailing clouds of glory behind her in the shape of a huge skein of white wool and she showed only a faint interest in the Dardanelles.

'I *must* help,' she said, 'and as all the knitting needles in the house are occupied I am going to wind this wool into a ball.'

'And he', said Francesca, thus lightly indicating me, 'will help you. It's time he did something. He can hold the skein while you wind it off.'

'Splendid!' I said with an alacrity which, I am sure, was hollow. 'Give me the skein. Let me hold it. Of course I'm a champion tangler. All the skeins I've ever held have had thousands of knots in them. I suppose it's because of my thumbs; but a man can't help his thumbs, can he? Let us begin at once,' and I sprung from my chair and seized the nearest parts of Mrs. Archdale's skein.

Gently, but with the utmost firmness, Mrs. Archdale declined my help. She could never dream, she said, of separating a man from his evening paper. It would be unforgivable. Besides, she could manage quite well without me.

The Wool-Winder

'Use the back of his armchair,' said Francesca. 'It's the only suitable one in the room. He can bend forward.'

'Yes,' I said, 'I'm the best bend-forward in the neighbourhood. You'll miss me nearly every time. Besides, if you do catch me, what *does* it matter? To be strangled is nothing so long as it's in a good cause.'

But Mrs. Archdale said No, it was quite unnecessary. She thanked me warmly for my offer of assistance, but she had a patent and infallible plan for winding wool unaided. All she had to do was to put the skein round her foot and knee—like this—and the thing was as good as done. Even if she did happen to want a chair-back, there were plenty in the room that she could use at a pinch without inconveniencing me. Thereupon she began.

It might be supposed that in the contest which followed all the odds were on the side of a resolute and resourceful woman, as against a mere inanimate bundle of wool, but to suppose thus would be doing an injustice to the innumerable wiles and the worse than devilish traps of this memorable skein. It was not one duel, but a whole series of duels, in which Mrs. Archdale seemed to compose herself against her will into a succession of momentary *tableaux vivants*. Sometimes she was foiled, sometimes she triumphed. Her arms, her feet, her head involved themselves in the most remarkable positions, but, though the dastardly skein seemed never to diminish, the white ball, the symbol of hope, the proof of a woman's unconquerable mind, steadily grew in size. I could not remove my fascinated eyes from her, but Francesca kept hers imperturbably on her bed-sock, while her fingers moved and her needles clicked with a dreadful and dauntless celerity. Let me describe what I saw.

Tableau No. 1. Industry Depressed by Care.—Mrs. Archdale on the sofa, with the skein firmly bound round her right foot and knee. She makes a few rapid passes with both hands, meets an obstruction attempts in vain to separate it into its component parts, says 'Tut-tut' several times, bends down suddenly and seizes her feet in an attitude of lowly despair.

Tableau No. 2. Victory Crowning the Brave.—Mrs. Archdale disengages the skein from her foot and knee, hangs it over the back

The Wool-Winder

of a chair and rises to her full height. She then winds wool feverishly round her waist and neck, and, with strands of wool dependent from her hands, spreads out both her arms in a posture strongly resembling that of the Crimean monument in Waterloo Place.

Tableau No. 3. Thought Ruling the World.—Mrs. Archdale, still standing, passes the wool round the back of her head, bites it, presses it against her breast with her chin and drops her arms to her sides.

After this there were several minor *tableaux*, and it was evident that both parties were feeling their punishment severely. Mrs. Archdale, however, lasted the better of the two, and eventually we came to:

The Final Tableau. The Lure of the Spider.—Mrs. Archdale, standing, with tight strands of wool radiating from her feet, her body and head to all her fingers and both her wrists and elbows. Through these she looms, dimly visible. She attempts to untie herself, trips and falls backwards into the sofa. 'At last,' she murmurs, and, lo, with a few frantic circular movements the ball is completed and the spider emerges from her web.

After this it hardly seemed necessary to discuss the Dardanelles.
R. C. L.

The fact that the war is costing over a million a day makes one wonder whether there may not be an opening for cheaper wars. Estimates are being invited from a few of the South American Republics. (10.3.15.)

ON THE SPY TRAIL

The man next door has had a shock to his system—it was the same man who told Jimmy that snowdrops were harbingers. You see, Jimmy's bloodhound Faithful was sitting on the window-ledge of Jimmy's bedroom catching flies for coming through the window at him. If they didn't come through, he just said 'Snap', and caught them as they went by. Faithful is a good snapper, and caught ten

On the Spy Trail

flies and a bee. He didn't want the bee really. You see, the bee thought Jimmy's bloodhound was a geranium, and settled on his nose. Faithful turned both eyes inwards to get the proper focus, and then they both said 'Snap' at the same time, and fell out of the window together.

The man who was passing below had his umbrella up and was expecting rain, not bloodhounds and bees, Jimmy says.

Instead of getting up off the ground, he lay quite still, and put his fingers in his ears waiting for the bang. He knew you had to lie flat on the ground till the bomb went off, but he didn't know how long you had to stop there while it did it. Jimmy says the man appeared very thoughtful when he got up; he seemed to be considering something.

It took Jimmy a long time to find his bloodhound, and then he found him holding his nose in a bucket of water to cool it, and looking from side to side as if he expected another bee. Jimmy says it was all right when he tied a blue bag on to Faithful's nose, except that Faithful had to keep looking round the corner of the blue bag to see where he was going.

Jimmy says Faithful must have swallowed the bee, because when his nose got all right he swallowed the blue bag. Jimmy says bloodhounds have got a lot of instinct like that, and it's done by careful breeding. Faithful was very restless that night. Jimmy thinks the blue bag or the bee must have curdled his stomach. He tried to sing himself to sleep, but he couldn't go off.

Jimmy says Faithful then tried to go to sleep by counting sheep, but he couldn't, for every now and then he would jump up and chase one of the sheep, and then he had to start all over again.

Jimmy says the man next door said 'Hush!' just like that.

Jimmy's bloodhound wasn't quite himself next morning for some reason or other; he had a hiccup for one thing, and seemed perturbed. Jimmy says the bee must have felt a bit unstrung too, as he couldn't hear it buzzing when he listened outside Faithful. Jimmy says that perhaps it couldn't see well enough to buzz.

But whenever Jimmy's bloodhound loses its iron nerve, it has a way which soon makes it feel bold and daring.

On the Spy Trail

It's a tortoise, and it's a hundred and three years old, Jimmy says.

Whenever Faithful sees the tortoise he always pulls himself together and dares the tortoise to come out of its shell. Jimmy says that when the tortoise refuses to growl back Faithful gets husky with rage and puts his mouth close to the tortoise and bays down the telephone at him.

Jimmy says that sometimes Faithful will wait hours for the tortoise to come and really have it out with him, and just when Faithful is getting tired of waiting the tortoise will slowly push out one hind leg and wag it at him, and then draw it back quickly just as Faithful is going to begin.

Jimmy says Faithful doesn't know the tortoise is a hundred and three years old, that's why. But Jimmy could see Faithful had got his iron nerve back again, because after he had had a little snooze he climbed under the hedge and went and drank the milk that had been put out for the cat next door.

Jimmy says the cat came at half time and deliberately went up to Faithful and gave him the coward's blow, and when Faithful was going to hurl the taunt in her face she went and looked like a camel at him.

Jimmy says it was awful, for you know what bloodhounds are when they are roused. They just catch the cat by the middle of the back, throw it once—only once, Jimmy says—up in the air, and then leave it for the gardener to bury.

Jimmy says it's all done by knack, and that's why cats push their backs up out of reach; they know.

Jimmy says it was a very unwilling cat, and was very rude to his bloodhound; it did something at him with its mouth, so Faithful just came away and bided his time; he is a good bider.

In the afternoon Jimmy took Faithful on the trail: he wanted to catch a spy before the grass got damp. He tried a different direction this time, but Faithful seemed to know. He soon got into his steady swing, and led Jimmy right away to a house which stands a quarter of a mile back from the road. They had to crawl stealthily along a hedge, and then through another hedge on to a lawn.

On the Spy Trail

Jimmy says he hid behind a laurel bush whilst Faithful did his deadly work. Jimmy says it's a grand sight to see a bloodhound working well. Faithful first visited some bones he knew of in a tulip bed; Jimmy says they may have been human bones—of another spy. Then Faithful advanced very cautiously to an open window, on the ledge of which a lady had just placed some crumbs for the birds. Jimmy says Faithful very carefully placed his paws on the window-ledge and, gradually drawing himself up, reached out with his tongue.

Jimmy says the lady must have been in the room and seen Faithful's full face for he heard her give a gasp like pouring cold water down another boy's neck.

When Faithful heard the gasp he stopped reaching out for the crumbs and, holding on with all his might, he fixed the lady with his eye. Jimmy says the lady sank amongst the furniture, he could hear her doing it; but before she did it she said something to Faithful which caused him to lose his grip and fall with his whole weight right back on a pink hyacinth: it bent it nearly double, Jimmy says.

It is awful when a bloodhound fixes you with his eye, Jimmy says; it goes all down your spine and makes you feel like you do when the photographer takes the cap off the camera at you.

Jimmy says that Faithful looked quite downcast when he saw him in the road; it was because he knew he had made a mistake. You see Jimmy had seen the lady before; her name was Mrs. Jones, and she used to collect for the War. But could a prize bloodhound like Faithful possibly make a mistake? that's what puzzled Jimmy.

Jimmy saw the lady again two or three days after when she called to see his mother. Jimmy says Susan opened the door, and the lady told Susan she had called for the War. Susan said if she would step inside she would get it for her. Jimmy says Mrs. Jones stepped inside and began to wipe her feet upon his bloodhound, who happened to be lying down curled up in the hall.

Jimmy says that's one of the things you should never do with bloodhounds; it goads them. Jimmy says Faithful must have been thinking of the bee in his sleep, for he said, 'Snap' very quickly this

On the Spy Trail

time, before the lady's boot could say it back, and then he did the side stroke upstairs as hard as he could.

Mrs. Jones was very angry with Faithful for saying 'Snap' first. She said some words to Jimmy's bloodhound which Jimmy had heard before. Jimmy says it was on the day when he bought a lemon to suck in front of a man playing the flute in a German band. You have to let him see you sucking it by making a juicy noise with your mouth, Jimmy says, and it makes his mouth water, and all in good time he throws the flute at you. Jimmy says you do it by being very quick, and you can hear the German words coming after you as you go along.

Jimmy says Mrs. Jones only said some of the words, and then settled comfortably on the floor with her head in the umbrella stand. Jimmy's mother heard one of the words; it was '*verfluchter*'. Jimmy says his mother would make a splendid detective if she were only a man. When Mrs. Jones recovered and wanted to go and have her leg amputated, Jimmy's mother took her into the drawing-room and began writing down names in the lady's Belgian Relief book. She told Jimmy she put her own name down for £10, and then Jimmy's for £5, and then Susan's and Faithful's, and kept breaking the pencil after every entry. She said she thought the policeman would never come, and was just going to put his name down for a lot of relief when he brought it himself.

Jimmy says they went very quickly to the police station because when the cab-horse turned round and saw Faithful he bolted.

The policeman told Jimmy next day that it was a clear case, and that the magistrates were going to sit on Mrs. Jones next week for being a spy.

W. St. G. D.

The Kaiser's admirers are now drawing attention to yet another proof of his love of peace. His Majesty, they point out, strained every nerve to prevent Italy becoming involved in the War. (26.5.15.)

Defaulters

DEFAULTERS

*For an extra drink
Defaulters we,
We cuts the lawn in front of the Mess;
We're shoved in clink,
Ten days C.B.
And rolls the lawn in front of the Mess.*

*We picks up weeds
And 'umps the coal;
We trims the lawn in front of the Mess;
We're plantin' seeds,
The roads we roll,
Likewise the lawn in front of the Mess.*

*The Officers they
Are sloshin' balls
On the lawn we've marked in front of the Mess
And every day
Our names they call
To rake the lawn in front of the Mess.*

*And once a while
They 'as a 'do'
On the lawn in front of the Officers' Mess
Ain't 'arf some style,
Band playin' too,
On our bloomin' lawn in front of the Mess.*

*They dances about
And digs their heels
In our lawn in front of the Officers' Mess,
There ain't no doubt
As 'ow we feels
For the lawn in front of the Officers' Mess.*

Defaulters

*The turf's gone west,
And so you see
There ain't much lawn in front of the Mess.
We does our best,
Gets more C.B.,
And mends the lawn in front of the Mess.*

*The C.O., who
Sez 'e can see
We loves the lawn in front of the Mess,
'E knows this too——
Without C.B.
There'd be no lawn in front of the Mess.*

C. J. P.

The German Crown Prince retains his taste for curios. A recent snapshot depicts him shaking hands with a German soldier who does not possess the Iron Cross. (18.8.15.)

THE WATCH DOGS

My dear Charles,——We do not spend all our days in the trenches. I cannot tell you exactly where we do spend them, but some days find us artfully concealed not far away ready to dash forward and add to the confusion in any emergency. Near this spot is a little pool amongst the trees surrounded by rushes. The other night, about the hour of last post, a disturbance was created in the trenches and we had the alarm. In less time than it takes to tell all were alert and standing to; dispositions were made, extra ammunition and emergency rations were issued, cigarette cases had been filled and companies were ready to move off. And so we waited, prepared for anything and everything, all agog, until the sounds died down and it became clear that the matter in hand was some private affair of the people on duty in the trenches. In dismissing

The Watch Dogs

my little lot I thought fit to have the roll called; our old friend, the sanitary man, was missing. Excitement at once became intense again; the sanitary man, with or without his apparatus, is usually so particularly present. Had he gone forth alone to tackle the enemy single-handed, as he tackles the flies, with his cresol and his chloride of lime? We called him, we whistled him, we searched for him high and low, but all in vain. We were just giving up hope and beginning to speak kindly of him as of a thing of the past when I thought fit to search the pool. And there, among the rushes, he was—fishing.

I have been informed of two important events, outside our unit but in the area. The first concerns three dastardly privates who were caught red-handed at the prohibited gambling. The whole lot, cards and all, were apprehended and placed in the custody of the guardroom, pending their appearance at orderly-room next morning. It transpired, but not during the proceedings, that in the interval between arrest and trial they compensated themselves and, so to speak, consolidated their position by teaching the guard their method of play and mulcting every member of it of every penny he possessed. The other incident concerns the artillery. Nobody who has been in the trenches will contradict me when I say that our field batteries, whatever other faults they may have, do love being really busy. Give them a job and they will concentrate their whole selves on it, thinking of nothing else night or day. I shall not be giving anything away if I say that this is a spot at which many of the smaller batteries, each having its private beat, converge. Opposite, behind the enemy lines, a tall chimney stack had too long remained intact. "It is an observation post," said the field batteries assembled in secret conclave; 'it is a menace. To-morrow morning shortly after dawn we shall remove it.' The hour was fixed, the very second was agreed upon. At the scheduled moment every gun in every battery was to be laid upon it and, at the sending up of a signal, battery fire was to be opened, continuing till the chimney discontinued. You may imagine what sleepless nights were spent, with what a concentrated fever of expectation and anticipation all concerned fixed their glasses on the target at dawn and waited. . . .

Meanwhile one of those large and imperturbable monsters known

The Watch Dogs

as 'Mother' had arrived by night, unbeknownst, some miles in the rear. As soon as it was light she looked about her for some convenient object on which to try her strength, any old target suitable for a preliminary canter with a singleton shell. And on the horizon she saw a chimney stack which, she thought, would do as well as anything else.

I hope, Charles, that you have mixed with field gunners, so that you may realise the true inwardness of the final tableau. I don't suppose there was a single man, from the Chaplain to the officers' mess cook, who was not standing there waiting for that signal and the to-do which should follow it. The affair was so beautifully timed that the signal actually did go up, just about three-fifths of a second after the chimney had come down. . . . I confess that, on hearing the story, I instinctively gave all my sympathies to the German infantry in the trenches thereabouts.

In our own trenches we have a listening post so close to the enemy that all conversation in it is conducted in a whisper. The Brigadier, with his retinue, inspected it the other day. 'I've 'eard summut,' whispered the listener with a grave air. A smile of pride in the efficiency of his men spread over the Company Commander's face; the C.O. prepared himself to accept, with becoming modesty, any praise that was going; the Brigade Major produced the Field Service Pocket Book; the Adjutant sharpened his pencil and the Brigadier officially demanded the details. 'Indeed, sir,' whispered the listener, 'I 'eard summut as it might be bacon frizzlin' over a brazier.'

I have not told you much of that element, too prominent, alas! in our daily life, the stretcher; but one very vivid case I think I may mention. A soldier, I take it, is none the less a hero simply because he has a touch of the actor about him, and Private X is no less a man because he has always, apparently, looked forward to the moment when the stage should be his and himself in the centre of it. As we were proceeding from the trenches to the rear, in a small party for a temporary purpose, his opportunity came in the shape of a spent bullet. The hit was anything but serious, yet was such as to compel him to assume any position but the sitting one; but, even

The Watch Dogs

lying on his face at the bottom of the trench, he did justice to the scene and wouldn't have it spoilt by the well-meant efforts of a comrade who saw herein the chance of practising bandage work. "Ere, kid," said Casualty, abandoning his semi-consciousness for the purpose, 'stand clear and leave it to the stretcher-bearers.' The latter, arriving, played up well and the affair concluded with an effective curtain. As the stretcher party moved off, 'Good-bye, chaps,' said Casualty, 'and cheer-oh!' and from his pocket he produced, with an obvious effort, a jaded cigarette and lit it. I'll warrant that very cigarette had stood by in that very pocket from the beginning of things and for this very purpose.

It is the sequel, told me by the S.B. Corporal, which makes me take this view. The bearers had endeavoured to humour Casualty with the promise of a quick recovery, but Casualty had made it quite plain to them that he didn't want humouring and wasn't going to recover, and the party were proceeding in a pathetic silence when those confounded German gunners must needs intervene and spoil everything. Stretcher-bearers are used to being harassed in their work by occasional shrapnel falling round and about, but to Casualty it was a new and unwelcome thing to lie inert in the open in such circumstances. A chance shell bursting nearer than the others, he gave all his theatrical ambitions the go-by, leapt in a flash from the stretcher and legged it, just about as fast as humanity can run, back to the trenches, where, after some small local treatment, he continues at duty to this day.

I write to you from the trenches, Charles, where life rolls on as usual and consists almost entirely of large shells and little flies. We get into the habit of not asking for much, but it would be something if only some of the big shells would kill some of the small flies.

Yours ever,

Henry.

F. O. L.

At the Front

It was quite a mistake to suppose that the recent visit of the German airships created no impression in England. A soldier writes from the Front: 'The Zepps., I hear, have been to our place and Mother was frightened, but, as you know, the least thing upsets her.' (1.9.15.)

AT THE FRONT

There is a deservedly popular military song which states, with perhaps unnecessary iteration, that the singers are there because they're there, because they're there, because they're there. That is exactly how we find ourselves placed at the moment. Here is a dusty lane with eligible greensward adjacent. We have been here since 9 a.m., and it is now 6 p.m. We have long since given up discussing why we should be here, where we are going when we leave here, and, indeed, whether we are ever going to leave here.

Last night all was peace, except that I was told to sleep in my boots. I can only assume that they must inadvertently have slipped off; for when the morning broke I appeared to be devoid of foot-fittings of any kind. While I was thinking over this mystery the Company fell in. Fortunately they were very sleepy and by the time my platoon-sergeant had persuaded them to form something other than threes and fives, I was on the spot explaining small but important technicalities, such as the advisability of taking ammunition when you're going to a battle, and the difficulty of getting a really satisfactory drink out of an empty water-bottle.

Eventually, we set out and walked along some roads till we came to this one, where no doubt the following conversation took place:

C.O. Have you the least idea where we are going to, or why?

Adj. No, sir.

C.O. Do you see any possible point in our going any further?

Adj. No, sir.

C.O. Then don't let's.

Adj. Very good, sir. I will make it my business to see that the process is discontinued.

At the Front

So we all sat down by the roadside and took off our equipment and almost everything else and went to sleep in the sun. . . .

It is now considerably later—two days later, in fact. We still inhabit the dusty lane and eligible greensward. A fear has gone abroad that it has been assigned to us as a billet. This is all very fine in its way, but when you have received a message reading (more or less): ‘Attack on in ten minutes’ time; bring a sandbag and a bayonet,’ and you then find you have to live an infinite time with a sandbag for furniture and bedding, and a bayonet to shave and brush your teeth with, you come to realise that the greenwood tree business isn’t half what it’s cracked up to be. Besides, when you have found your place on the map—if you have one—and inspected your rifles and sandbags and bayonets, there really isn’t much to do here unless you have a geometrical turn of mind and care for plotting the angles between the buttercups. If you are a keen soldier you can, of course, go on inspecting your platoon’s rifles and sandbags and bayonets, because, by the time you have criticised the last bayonet, going round conscientiously, there’s no knowing what may have happened to the first rifle or sandbag. This will keep the men interested too, and save them from getting into mischief, surrounded as they are by all manner of temptations.

Before we ceased speculating on our prospects, our strategists advanced all possible views. The best supported theory was that we were being held in reserve to create a diversion through Switzerland which was to come in on the spur of the moment. The most obvious and horrible prospect—that of remaining here till the end of the War—no one has dared to put forward.

Yet ours cannot be a totally inglorious oblivion. Before we settled here we won fame. A very large if slightly bleary photograph, representing two of our sections on the march, had been published in a certain notorious daily journal which is fully prepared to finish the War in a month if it only gets the chance. It is true that the legend subjoined was ‘Belgian Artillery Resting’, but you cannot expect glory *and* accuracy for a halfpenny, can you?

A. J.

A Question of the Nude

A QUESTION OF THE NUDE

They scrambled into the carriage in a tremendous hurry, all talking at once at the tops of their voices, all very excited and very dirty. They had mud on their boots which had evidently come from France, and their overcoats had that rumpled appearance which distinguishes overcoats from the Front from those merely in training.

There seemed to be about ten of them as they got into the train, but when they had deposited various objects on the rack, such as rifles, haversacks, and kit-bags like partially deflated airships, the number resolved itself into three.

The compartment already contained—besides myself—a naval warrant officer, reading *Freckles* with a sentimental expression, and a large leading seaman with hands like small hams and a peaceful smile like a jade Buddha. It said 'H.M.S. Hedgehog' round his cap, but when I ventured to remark that I once in peace-time saw and visited that vessel he observed with indifference that 'cap-ribbons was nothin' to go by these days; point o' fact he never see that there ship in his puff.' Otherwise they maintained that deep and significant silence which we have learned to associate with our Navy.

The Tommies, however, were in very talkative vein. 'Now,' I thought, 'I shall doubtless hear some real soldiers' stories of the War, even as the newspaper men hear them and reproduce them in the daily prints: the crash of the artillery, the wild excitement of battle—in short, the Real Thing——'

A momentous question had evidently been under discussion when they entered the train, and as soon as they were settled in their seats they resumed it.

'Wot I want to know is,' said the largest of the three, a big man with a very square face and blue eyes—'wot I want to know is—is that there feller to go walkin' about naked?' The last word was pronounced as a monosyllable.

He sent his fists squarely on his knees and glared around him with a challenging expression.

'No, it's agin the law,' said a small man with a very hoarse voice.

A Question of the Nude

'Course it is,' rejoined the other. 'Well, wot's the feller to do? That's wot I ast you. If 'e walks about naked, well, 'e gets took up for bein' naked; if 'e doesn't, why, 'e gets 'ad for not returnin' 'is uniform.'

He looked round again and decided to take the rest of us into consultation.

'This 'ere's 'ow it stands—see? 'Ere's a feller got the mitten along o' not bein' able to march, through gettin' shot in the leg. 'E goes home pendin' 'is *discharge*, an' they tells 'im to return 'is kar-kee *an'* small kit——'

'An' small kit?' burst out the third member of the party indignantly—a sprightly youth with a very short tunic and a pert expression. 'Do they want you to return your small kit when you get the mitten? Watch me returnin' mine, that's all!'

'You'll 'ave to,' said the voice of Discipline.

'Ave to, I don't think!' said the rebel ironically. 'I couldn't if I'd lorst it.'

'I ain't got no small kit, any'ow,' said the small and husky one; 'I put my haversack down when we was diggin' one of our chaps out of a Jack Johnson 'ole, and some bloomin' blighter pinched it! Now that's a thing as I don't 'old with. Rotten, I call it. I wouldn't say nothin' about it, mind you, if I was dead; I like to 'ave something as belonged to a comrade, myself, an' I know as 'e'd feel the same, seein' as 'e couldn't want it 'imself. But, if you take a feller's things w'en 'e's alive, why, you don't know 'ow bad 'e might want 'em some day.'

'Corporal 'e ses to me, las' kit inspection,' broke in the fresh-faced youth, disregarding this nice point of ethics. "'W'ere's your toothbrush?" 'e ses. "Where you won't find it," I ses. "'Oo're you talkin' to?" 'e ses. "Dunno," I ses; "the ticket's fell off! . . . Well, wot d'yer call yourself, any'ow," I ses, "you an' yer stripe?" I ses. "Funny bundle," I ses, "that's what I call you!"'

'Well, I don't see wot a feller's got to do,' said the propounder of the problem, returning to the charge. 'Granted as 'e can't walk about naked; granted as 'e 'asn't got a suit o' civvies of 'is own—wot *is* 'e to do?'

A Question of the Nude

'Ang on to 'is kar-kee,' said the hoarse-voiced man. The setter-down of corporals retired within himself, probably to compose some humorous repartee.

The warrant officer came out of *Freckles* and suggested writing a letter.

'E 'as done. 'E's wrote an' told 'em 'as 'e can't send 'is kar-kee back until 'e gets a suit of Martin 'Enry's or thirty bob in loo of same. An' all as they done was to write again an' demand 'is uniform at once.'

The warrant officer sighed and opined that orders were orders.

'Yes, but 'e'd 'ave to carry 'em to the Post Office naked, wouldn't 'e? An' 'ow about goin' to buy new ones? That's if 'e'd drawed 'is pay, which 'e 'asn't. Unreasonable, that's wot I calls it.'

''Asn't 'e got no civvies at all?' said the small man, beginning to look sceptical. ''Asn't he got no one as'd lend 'im a soot? Anyways, 'e could get some one to post 'em for 'im, an' then stop in bed till 'is others come.'

'E's a very lonely feller,' said the champion of the unclad; 'e lives in lodgin's, an' 'e 'asn't got no friends. If 'e 'adn't got no clothes for to fetch 'is pay in, wot then?'

A gloomy silence, a silence fraught with the inevitability of destiny, settled on the party.

The warrant officer, who had been pretending to resume *Freckles*, presently looked up and suggested that he could go in his uniform to a tailor, explain the position and obtain clothes on credit.

The originator of the problem thought hard for a minute.

'E isn't a man as I'd care to trust myself,' he said rather unexpectedly, 'an' I don't think no one else would neither.'

It was at this point that the man from H.M.S. *Hedgehog* (or, to be precise, H.M.S. *Something Else*) fell into the conversation suddenly, like a bomb.

'E wouldn't be naked,' he said earnestly; ''e'd 'ave 'is shirt.'

This was a staggerer. One of those great simple truths sometimes overlooked by more abstruse thinkers. But the owner of the problem made one more stand.

'Oo'd walk about in a shirt?' he said scornfully.

A Question of the Nude

'Me,' said the large seaman. 'Last time I was torpedoed——'

He didn't say another word; but the problem was irretrievably lost. There had been something magnificently daring about the idea of a man walking about like a lost cherub; partly clothed, nobody cared very much what became of him.

Besides, we all wanted to hear Admiralty secrets. We sat there in respectful silence while the train rattled on its way; but the large seaman only went on smiling peacefully to himself, as if he were ruminating in immense satisfaction upon unprecedented bags of submarines.

C. F.-S.

Our men in the trenches are beginning to welcome the German gas attacks. They say there's nothing like them for keeping down the rats. (5.1.16.)

THE GRASS VALLEY ARMISTICE

'E didn't mean to do it,' he said, touching the bandages on his head. 'Oh no, quite an accident. It was a foo-de-joy—doorin' the armistice. Wot, haven't you 'eard of Grass Valley Armistice?'

I said I couldn't recall it for the moment.

'It was doorin' September,' he said; 'lasted two hours. Sergeant Duffy started it.

'E was put on a patrol one night, and suddenly 'e comes rushin' back over the parapet and goes chargin' down to the Major's dug-out with a face like this 'ere sheet.

"'They'me comin'," ses Binks 'oo was next to me, and we were just goin' to loose off a round or two, when we 'eard 'ole Duffy 'ollerin' in the Major's bunk.

"'Barbed wire's gone, Sir," 'e ses.

"'Wot?" ses the Major.

"'Ave to report the wire's gone," ses Duffy again.

The Grass Valley Armistice

"Tell Lootenant Bann," drawls the ole man, as if someone 'ad told 'im tea was ready.

'When Bann 'ears the noos, 'e fires a light up.

"Can't see none," 'e mutters, quite annoyed, and off 'e goes over the top to find out for sure. In 'arf an hour 'e was back again.

"The blighters 'ave pinched our wire," 'e ses to the Major. "They've drawed across them chevoo-der-freezes I put out, and stuck them on their own dirty scrap-'eap."

"Fetch 'em back," says the Major, very off-'and like.

"Right-o," says Bann. "Right-o." For 'e'd spent three solid hours putting the wire out.

"Fetch a pick an' some rope," 'e ses to Duffy. "I'm goin' to 'arpoon our wire." Then he tied the rope to the 'andle of the pick and trots off over the parapet.

'After a bit we 'ears the pick land amongst the barbed wire with a rattle like a bike smash, an' the next minit back comes young Bann, sprintin' like a 'are an' uncoilin' the rope on the way.

"Now then," he shouts, jumpin' into the trench, "man the rope!" an' we lines up ready down the communication trench. "'Aul away," 'e 'ollers, an' back we goes, pullin' like transport-mules.

'It give a few inches to start with, an' then a foot or two, an' then, just when the wire must 'ave been 'alf-way 'ome it suddenly stuck fast.

"Must 'ave caught on summat," ses Bann, an' sets off with 'is wire-cutters to clear it.

"'Eave," grunts ole Jones at the end of the rope. "'Eave-o, my 'earties," and' then 'e knocks up against the ration-party comin' 'ome down the communication trench. "'Ang on, mates," 'e shouts to them, an' down goes the bully bif, an' the next minit a loud rip an' some bad language told us 'is coat couldn't stand it.

'We got some more chaps at it then, but the rope never budged an inch.

'Then Bann comes runnin' back again, very excited-lookin'. "Look out!" he shouts; "the Bosches 'ave got a rope 'itched on, too."

The Grass Valley Armistice

'Sure enough, the next minit the Germans puts their weight on, and pulls 'alf of us right over the bloomin' parapet.

'The Major comes along then, and when 'e sees the state of things 'e looks quite solemn, for there was only Lootenant Bann and ole Jones left in the trench.

"'Where's the team?" 'e snaps, as severe as if you'd come on parade without your rifle.

"'Fall in, tug-o'-war team," sings out Duffy and our eight, 'oo 'ad been lookin' on rather superior like, moistens their 'ands and stands to.

"'This is your work," ses the Major to them, very significant.

"'Take the strain," 'ollers Duffy, and the evening doo fair streamed out of the rope when they put their weight on. Back goes our team, two foot at least, whilst the lads cheers and yells as if we was winnin' the divisional prize on Salisbury Plain again.

'By this time the Bosches was just as excited as we were. They was rushin' about in the open with our men, 'owling their lingo and firin' off their rifles for encouragement. I stopped a shot somebody 'ad aimed at the sky for joy.

'When ole Binks and the German chap 'oo 'ad done it was carryin' me back to our trench, I saw the Major come rushin' past.

"'Go it, men," 'e sings out to our chaps, and then off 'e sprints again, to finish a bet he was makin' with the German officer.

'For an hour and a 'alf the excitement was awful. Up and down went that wire until the place looked like a ploughed field. First we gained an inch, then Germany 'ad a couple, then England gets one back, and up goes our caps again. Everybody was rushin' about yellin', and ole Binks, 'oo knows a bit of German, made a nice bit of money at interpretin'.

'Then things suddenly got worse. Our eight 'ung like 'eroes, everyone swearin' 'e wouldn't loose that rope if 'e was pulled into the Kayser's bloomin' bedroom; but sure enough the Huns was slowly winnin'. Inch by inch we saw our chaps give way, black in the face at the notion of bein' beat. The Bosches yelled like 'eathens, and was shakin' hands with everybody. Then all of a sudden young Bann comes rushin' up to the Major, 'oo was takin' four to one with a chap from Coburg.

The Grass Valley Armistice

"“Stop, Sir!” I ’ears ’im shout. “Stop the contest! The dirty blighters are usin’ a *windlass*.”

““Wot?” ’owls the Major, goin’ purple at the thought of international laws bein’ disregarded like that.

““Take the men off the rope,” ’e orders. “We hunderstood we was pullin’ with gentlemen,” ’e ses very dignified, and then thinkin’, no doubt, of the four to one in dollars ’e’d ’ave won if they’d played fair ’e orders us to stand to and give them ren rounds rapid; and ’e used such language on the telephone that the Artillery thought we was attacked, and loosed off every shell they could lay hands on. So the War started again, you see.’

He touched his head and thought a minute. ‘That was Grass Valley Armistice,’ he said finally, and relapsed into silence.

S. H. H.

IN THE AIR IN 1940

(*Wars of the future will be waged in the air . . . cities will be laid waste in a night.*—Press.)

April 20, 1940.—Liberia, in a moment of Ministerial exuberance, sends a Note to China alleging the death of a Krooboy subject who had been forced to study the Chinese language. An indemnity of £100,000,000 is asked.

April 22.—China, mildly surprised, promises investigation. Owing to an oversight, however, the reply is sent in Chinese characters, which gives the Liberians a just *casus belli*.

April 23.—Liberia despatches her one airship to China *via* Tibet. Many bombs are dropped on the Chinese Empire and several rice-fields are quite spoilt. The Chinese Ambassador, whom the airship conveyed from Liberia, is also dropped—and spoilt.

April 24.—China sends four airships to bomb Liberia. These, however, are unable to locate the Black Republic and return, after dispensing with the company of the Liberian Ambassador while over Lake Chad.

April 26.—China addresses a curt Note to Liberia, requesting her to be good enough to state her exact whereabouts.

In the Air in 1940

May 1.—The Grand Lama directs a plaintive Note to Liberia, alleging that on April 23 a Liberian airship violated the neutrality of Tibet.

May 3.—Liberia, never having heard of Tibet, but believing the G.L. to be a species of camel and a great fetish, publishes an apology in *The Liberian Times (and Advertiser)* which, however, does not circulate in Tibet.

May 4.—China, after exhaustive inquiries, despatches another air fleet, but again fails to locate her quarry.

May 5.—Liberia again raids China by air. Some stones in the Great Wall are badly chipped.

May 7.—Liberia issues her first official communiqué through the medium of *The Liberian Times (and Advertiser)*:—‘On the night of May 5–6 our Naval and Military airship attacked the Chinese cities of Peking, Hankow and others too intricate of pronunciation to be mentioned here. Incendiary and explosive bombs were dropped on the fortifications, gun emplacements, waterworks and waxworks at Peking. A battery and many hens were silenced at Hankow. Our entire air fleet returned safely and hurriedly.’

May 9.—The G.L. of Tibet sends another Note to Liberia, protesting against a further grave infringement of neutrality, several eggs of dubious quality and the remnants of an unsavoury stew having been dropped from a Liberian airship on Tibetan territory on the night of May 5–6.

May 11.—Liberia publishes another apology and sacks her air chef.

May 13.—Two squadrons of Chinese airships scour the globe but cannot find Liberia. Several are forced to land in the Arctic Circle and are interned by the Esquimaux.

May 15.—The G.L. of Tibet sends another Note to Liberia.

May 16.—Liberia, owing to a paper shortage, makes no reply.

May 17.—Liberia adopts the Group System.

May 18.—Introduction of ‘starring and badging’ in Liberia. Owing to a slight miscalculation all trades and professions are ‘reserved’.

May 19.—Liberia abandons Group System.

In the Air in 1940

May 24.—Liberia again despatches her airship to China *via* Tibet. The raider falls in flames near the Forbidden City, the commander having been rather careless with his cigar in one of the gas chambers.

May 25.—The G.L. of Tibet buys a typewriter and some carbon sheets, and begins a campaign of daily Notes to Liberia.

May 26–June 5—Liberia lies low.

June 7—China, after fifteen futile attempts to locate Liberia, sues for peace, asking Liberia to send an envoy who will be able to guide airships carrying Peace delegates and the first instalment of indemnity to Liberia.

July 12.—Ten Chinese airships, loaded with Peace delegates and money, and piloted by the Liberian envoy, travel to the Black Republic. Arrived over the much-sought country, the Peace Delegates drop their pilot and aid the airships' crews in wiping Liberia off the face of the earth.

July 14.—The G.L. of Tibet disposes of his typewriter at a considerable loss.

L. D. B.

'How many Russians does it take to make one offensive?' We aren't sure. All we know is that forty Poles make one rood. (2.8.16.)

THE BEST MAN

Letter from Captain Harry Desmond, 5th Blankshires, Aldershot, to Captain Charles Gibson, War Office, London.

Friday.

Dear Old Thing,—I am hoping to run up to town one day next week to get married. Will you be my best man, like a good fellow?

In haste, Yours, Harry.

From Captain Gibson to Captain Desmond.

Saturday.

My dear Chap,—Congratulations! I am not sure that I can

The Best Man

guarantee to look after every detail of the coming ceremony as I am up to my ears in work just now, but if it is merely a case of standing by and seeing that you do not give way to terror or excitement I think I can manage to put in an appearance. Let me know time and place. Yours, Charles.

From Captain Desmond to Captain Gibson.

Monday.

Dear Charles,—Thanks awfully. All I want you to do is to look after the ring and tip the verger and so on. I am attending to details of time and place myself, as I don't know exactly yet when I can get leave, so it will be a tremendous rush; but I will let you know later. Yours, H.

Post card from Captain Desmond to Captain Gibson.

Tuesday.

Ceremony takes place at 2 p.m. on Thursday—probably. Let you know for certain later. H.

Telegram from Captain Desmond to Captain Gibson.

Wednesday.

Thursday for certain. Be there. Harry.

Telegram from Captain Gibson to Captain Desmond.

Wednesday afternoon.

Where? Charlie.

Reply. None.

Telegram from Captain Gibson to Adjutant, 5th Blankshires, Aldershot.

Thursday morning.

Can you tell me Captain Desmond's present address?

Reply.

Thursday noon.

Left this morning on leave. Address, Naval and Military Club Pall Mall.

Captain Gibson.

'Hullo! That the Naval and Military Club? Is Captain Desmond

The Best Man

there? What? Just gone out? Where to? To get married—yes, or course, but where? You don't know? . . . Didn't say . . . Left no message. . . . Well, I'm. . . .'

Telegram from Captain Gibson to Captain Desmond's brother at Canterbury.

Can you tell me where Harry is being married?

Reply. No. Is he? When?

Letter from Captain Desmond, Grand Hotel, Torquay, to Captain Gibson, War Office, London.

My dear Boy,—Got six days' leave and having a topping time. Thanks awfully for being best man. Sorry you couldn't turn up.

Harry.

W. A. W.

STEW

*If you 'ave lost your 'aversack, your kit-bag or your pipe,
Your 'ousewife, soap or oily rag with which you clean your pipe,
Your belt or second pair o' socks, your lanyard or pullthrough,
Oh do not be dispirited, you'll get 'em in the stew!*

*If from the transport lines you miss a face you used to know,
With stick-up ears an' yellow teeth all in a smilin' row,
'E is not gone for evermore, though seemin' lost to view,
The late lamented Army mule, you'll meet 'im in the stew!*

*As we go through the countryside, route marchin' in the sun,
With bandy-rolls an' clobber on, which weighs about a ton,
Oh this is what the people shout as we go marchin' through,
' 'Ere come the Loyal Whatdyecalls—I'm sure I smelt the stew.*

*We get it 'ot, we get it cold, we get it in between,
We get it thin, we get it thick, we get it fat an' lean,
We get it for our 'day-joo-nay,' our tea an' luncheon too,
An' when the long day's march is done we top it up with stew.*

Stew

*When we are bound for foreign shores an' 'arf across the water,
The transport starts a-rollin' like a transport didn't oughter,
To cheer our faintin' spirits up when we are feelin' blue,
They'll get the daxies goin' an' they'll serve us out some stew.*

* * * * *

*So when the wicked war is done an' peace is 'ere again,
We won't forget the chaps as toiled to please our inner men;
We'll call to mind the favourite dish we found on our menu,
And think of our Battalion Cooks—an' drink their 'ealths in—Stew!*

C. F.—S.

The Kaiser has again issued a denial that he is responsible for the War. Apparently he just saw the little thing running about and patted its head. (23.8.16.)

THE WATCH DOGS

My dear Charles,—You will, I fancy, agree with me that War is assuming a serious aspect when a crowd of armour-plated monsters (under the command, it is rumoured, of General Heath Robinson) clamber laboriously out of our trenches and plod slowly but surely across to theirs, apparently to serve some useful purpose.

I see that they are officially described in the communiqué as 'heavy armoured motor-cars', but this does little justice to their buxom figures and autumnal tints, and is not too flattering to the modern automobile. The *Echo de Paris*, hovering between the words 'battleship' and 'caterpillar', gets nearer to the mark. If your imagination can conceive a cross between these two species you will have some idea of what happened to the Bosch in the early morning of September 16th, 1916.

I am told that, in one case, some of the more optimistic mistook the apparition, in the dim light of dawn, for a lost field-kitchen, and ran up to it with mess tins and an immediate request for hot coffee; but I do not believe that. I'm at a loss to conceive the real

The Watch Dogs

feelings of those who were, so to speak, being approached in the matter; they cannot have dared to hope that this was a novel, if extraordinarily cautious, method of desertion to their side of the invisible Englishmen within. There can have been no doubt that they came on business; I know them by sight and they have that look. But what manner of business was theirs and what reception should be accorded them? These are questions which must sorely have puzzled many a thoughtful Bosch that morning. No good firing at them; the bullets would only bounce off and hit you in the face. No good staying where you were; the things would only run over you. No good running away and climbing up a tree; they would only follow you. It was even no good running to a house and crouching on the other side of it; the unlovely but painstaking monster, coming across a building, merely leans up against the wall till it collapses, and then proceeds. It cannot be disputed that the whole idea was distinctly unkind; very funny, no doubt, but not quite nice.

When the matter was still in rehearsal I am told that the authorities had some knotty problems to solve. Should they be treated as motors and given horns, or as engines and given whistles? In the matter of drill discipline, was it up to the driver to give notice of his intention of turning a corner by thrusting his arm out through a loophole? Only one misgiving was felt. The crew, carried away by excitement, might go too far and find themselves stranded with all ammunition and motive power spent. Besieged and forced by hunger and lapse of time to surrender, they might have to open the window and come out. 'Mark my words,' a Disembarkation Officer is reported to have said as he piloted a platoon of these animals down the gangway, 'one of these days we shall find one of them back here again; not till we have gone up to it to stroke it and offer it a lump of sugar shall we find that its insides have become German and it has turned against us.' This may concern YOU, Charles. The animals look so dreadfully competent, I am quite sure they can swim. Thus, any day now, as you go to your business in the City, you may meet one of them trundling up Ludgate Hill, looking like nothing on earth and not behaving like a gentleman. I

The Watch Dogs

suppose you have by this time heard the first report we received of the progress of any member of the party, on that hilarious morning: 'Have just seen "The Hedgehog" walking up High Street, Flers, followed by crowd of cheering Tommies.'

Earlier operations round Ginchy, I believe, produced a smaller but not insignificant incident. It concerned a special system of sending reports from the battle. This may or may not be a regular practice; I don't know. In any case it was to be something very rapid, very effective, and very, very special. Great preparations were made and everything was provided for except the comfort of the man who had to carry the apparatus into the battle.

Any man in the Army who goes for a walk starts off with some hundredweights of luggage attached to him. Up to the moment the powers that be haven't taken to hanging odd knick-knacks to one's ears, but otherwise there is no space to let. If in addition to the packs and pouches, arms, side-arms, water-bottles, haversacks, ammunition, gas helmets, emergency rations, and spare parts of everyday life a man has also to carry the apparatus of a special idea with him, he sets forth with little spring in his step, and after he has got some miles his enthusiasm for the special idea does not increase. I have no doubt that the man in this case besides his own luggage had also some pounds of patent stationery for writing his messages on, and many other contraptions in some way connected with his business. However that may be, he was started off all right, in good time for the battle.

By the time the message was expected a distinguished crowd had become interested in the affair and had forgathered at the receiving-station to witness the working of the special idea. I am informed there was a General among the waiting assembly, and that there was plenty of waiting to be done. It was bad enough when much time elapsed and no news of the battle arrived; it was worse when more time elapsed and news of the battle did arrive, but by other channels. Feelings were suppressed but intense; there was, in fact some impatience. Great things were expected of the apparatus; there must be some very important event it had been waiting all this time to bring the news of. I don't know how many of the distinguished crowd at

The Watch Dogs

this moment gave a thought to the man who'd set out in the early morning with the apparatus. I can only picture them all there, gathering round the General as the message was handed to him, listening in an expectant hush as he opened it and read: 'I think I've carried this damned apparatus long enough now.'

Lastly, let me tell you of the nameless battalion which, about this period of operations, had managed to capture five German prisoners, and with great zest and pride wired the great news to the Division, and intimated that the five were being sent forthwith to the Divisional cage. The officer who was detailed to meet and deal with them was a little disappointed to find that on their arrival there were only four. The escort most indignantly denied the accusation of having lost one on the way, and very strongly deprecated the other suggestion. Where then, said the officer, was the fifth? Reluctantly the truth was made known. It appeared that, after the wire had been sent, but before the prisoners had been started on their way, the captors had met another nameless battalion, and had been so melted by the latter's piteous tale of two months' toil and trouble, but never a single prisoner taken, that a bargain had been completed. The second battalion had in fact become owners of the prisoner, the missing fifth, by right of purchase. And at what price? Five hundred sandbags.

Yours ever, Henry.

F. O. L.

The highest praise of the Tank that has yet reached us comes from a member of a Scots unit, who writes, 'They plod slowly on and nothing stops them, not even estaminets.' (4.10.16.)

INTENSIVE CULTURE OF THE UPPER LIP

When I joined the army first they gave me a suit of khaki, which fitted me perfectly in one or two places, a Swedish razor which had several sharp spots, a toothbrush, a pot of blacking to polish my

Intensive Culture of the Upper Lip

buttons with, and a *papier-mâché* pendant stamped with my name and religion, in case I found myself answering to the name of Rockefeller at any time, or in the wrong church.

'Got all you want?' said the Army.

I made noises in the negative, and asked them for a suit of underclothes, to sort of bolster up the khaki, a shaving-brush as company for the razor, and a sword or something to keep the small boys away.

'You can't have the underclothes and the shaving-brush,' said the Army; 'we're keeping them for the next man. You've got the razor and the khaki—don't be greedy. No doubt the next man and yourself will be able to fix things up between you; he can lend you the underclothes on cold evenings and you can lend him your khaki when he goes out to have his photo took—be reasonable.'

'Oh, very well then,' said I, 'I'll waive the underclothes and go away quietly if you'll give me a moustache.'

'A what?' said the Army.

'A moustache,' I repeated. 'According to Army Order X.Y.Z. I've got to have one.'

'Quite right, me lad,' said the Army. 'You have; but they aren't on issue; the trooper has to find one out of his pay of one shilling and tuppence—one shilling for the upkeep of the trooper, tuppence for the upkeep of his moustache—see? And now go to blazes for if we have any more of your lip young man into the guard room you go!'

I saluted in a brisk and soldier-like manner and went away to start the moustache culture.

Here and there I was very successful, there and here I wasn't. My superiors would come up and make funny remarks about it, inquire who my barber was and did he shave poodles, or was the effect obtained by training the hair on a trellis? I would salute in a manner cheerful but subdued, tell them how much I enjoyed their superior humour, and carry steadfastly on with my moustache according to Army Order X.Y.Z. I sought to fertilize the desert spots with rifle-oil, dubbin, gall-cure, egg and marmalade; tried dry farming and French gardening—all to no avail. On the other hand, the oases grew so luxuriantly that I had to keep felling them to maintain the

Intensive Culture of the Upper Lip

average. They were not many in number, and I got to know them personally: Jane, Gwendoline, Hubert and Algernon on the near side; Eileen, Harold and dear little Emily—a slim auburn sapling—on the left. I grew to love the sound of the morning breeze singing through their stems, the turtling of the ringdoves among their foliage, and so on. I wondered if some shy dryad lurked in Harold's hollow core, if some prick-eared Pan piped on Algernon's mossy roots, etc.

And now my old friend, Army Order X.Y.Z., has handed in his paper and retired, I suppose, to those havens of old Army things, Cheltenham or Bedford, supplanted by Army Order P.T.O., a cynic, who hints broadly that 'moustaches consisting of only a few hairs' had best go into the waste-paper basket. It would be useless to quote to him:

*'Woodman, spare that tree!
Touch not a single bough!
In youth it sheltered me,
And I'll protect it now.'*

I know his sort—they get you shot at dawn, in your pyjamas, for insubordination.

And so to-morrow the trunks of Gwendoline, Jane, Algernon, Hubert, Eileen, Harold and dear little Emily will ring to the strokes of the Swedish razor, and I shall catch cold in my upper lip and never smile again.

C. G. (Patlander)

'We must all be prepared to make sacrifices,' says the *Berliner Tageblatt*. We understand that, acting on this advice, several high command officers have volunteered to sacrifice the Crown Prince. (31.1.17.)

Lions at Play

LIONS AT PLAY

By A Subaltern

The Colonel rustles his newspaper, smites it into shape with a mighty fist, rips it across in a futile endeavour to fold it accurately, and, casting it furiously aside in a crumpled mass, says, after the manner of all true War Lords, 'Uumph'. Whereupon the Ante-Room as one man takes cover.

The Colonel then turns cumbrously in his chair, permitting his eye to rove round the room in search of the unwary prey. He smiles cynically at the intense concentration of the Auction parties; winces at the renewed and unnatural efforts of those who make music; glares unamiably at the feverish bookworms, and suddenly breaks into little chuckles of satisfaction. The Ante-Room peers cautiously round to discover the identity of the unfortunate victim, and chuckles in its turn. The Adjutant, checked in his stealthy retreat, hastens back, arranges the table and chessboard, pokes the fire with unnecessary energy, and sits down. At once the Ante-Room abandons its cover.

The Colonel begins by grasping the box, turning it upside down, and spilling the contents over the sides of the table. The Adjutant immediately apologizes for his clumsiness. The Colonel then liberally spreads out the pieces, selects two pawns, and offers the Adjutant the choice of two fists. The Adjutant chooses. Each fist opens to disclose a white pawn. The Colonel's expansive smile over his little joke quickly turns to a frown at the Adjutant's exaggerated laughter. He suspects the Adjutant. He seizes two more pieces, offers his opponent another choice, but, to the latter's huge delight and his own discomfiture, eventually discovers that both are black. He accordingly makes use of his casting vote and selects white.

The Colonel plays a smashing game. When it is his turn to move he never pauses to make up his mind. His mind is already made up. All he has to do, immediately the Adjutant has finished touching up his position, is to move the piece his eye has been piercing throughout the long period of his opponent's cautious deliberation. When the Colonel moves a piece he may be said to get there. All

Lions at Play

obstructions are ruthlessly swept aside with a callous indifference to Hague Conventions. Should a knight haply descend from the clouds and settle on the correct square it arrives more by luck than judgment. Tradition alleges that whenever the Colonel is called upon to move his king in the earlier stages of the game all lights are turned off from the neighbouring town in accordance with the Defence of the Realm Regulations. However true this may be—the responsibility rests on the Padre's capable shoulders—when his king is moved in the later stages the Colonel pushes it along by half-squares in a haphazard and preoccupied manner. He invariably fills his pipe when the end is in sight, but leaves it unlighted so that he may cover his ultimate defeat by a general demolition of matches.

On this occasion the Adjutant skilfully snipes the Colonel's queen in the sixth move. The Colonel immediately retrieves the piece from the box, asks where it was before, examines it with the essence of loathing and revolt, removes it out of his sight, and refuses to take it back, although he had mistaken it for another piece. In retaliation he proceeds to concentrate all his effectives on his opponent's queen, and, after sacrificing the flower of his forces, drives the attack home and gains his objective with the greatest enthusiasm. He remarks that the capture was costly, but that honour is satisfied, and would the waiter kindly approach within earshot.

While the Adjutant is working up his offensive on the Colonel's right flank, the Colonel himself is making independent sallies on the left, unless, of course, he is compelled to march his king out of a congested district into more open country. On the rare occasions when he is at a loss for a moment what to do he makes it a practice to move a pawn one square in order to gain time. By this method, unexpectedly but none the less jubilantly, he recovers his queen—only to see it laid low again by enfilading fire from a perfectly obvious redoubt.

After twenty minutes of battle the Colonel's area becomes positively draughty, and the sole survivors of his dashing but sanguinary counter-attack, the king and two pawns, have assumed the bored and callous air of a remnant that has fought too long and is called upon to fight again. The Colonel has just unceremoniously

Lions at Play

pushed his sovereign to the rear with a flick of his nervous irritated little finger. His opponent can obviously bring him to his knees in two moves. Instead of which the Adjutant brazenly commences with massed bands and colours flying to execute a masterly tactical advance with the whole of his command—cavalry, infantry, church and tanks, in order to achieve the destruction of the two bantam bodyguards.

This is not playing the game, and the Colonel fumes inwardly and frets outwardly. In the intervals of pressing down the unlit tobacco in his pipe with an oscillating thumb, he alternately pokes his king out of the corner and pulls it back again; while his transparent impulse is to scrap the board, wreck the ante-room and run amok. The Adjutant continues his innocent amusement until at last the pleasure wanes. The two heroic pawns are carried decently off, and he apologetically whispers his suspicions of a checkmate to his commanding officer.

The Colonel brushes aside the Mess President's tinder-lighter, shatters the mute triumph of the serried black ranks of the hostile forces with one superb elevation of the eyebrows, smashes three matches in quick succession, and proves that all the time his mind has been preoccupied with weightier matters by saying after the manner of all true War Lords, 'Umph.'

D. C. E.

OUR NEW ARMY OF WOMEN

From Adjutant to O.C. A Company.

Your return of trained Bombers not yet to hand. Please expedite. (Did you see O.C. B Company's hat at church parade last Sunday? Isn't it positively the outside edge?)

Elizabeth Tudor Jones,
Mrs. and Adjutan.

Second-Lieut. Darling to Adjutant.

I should be obliged if I could have leave from next Tuesday, as

Our New Army of Women

otherwise I shall not be able to attend the sales, and my Sam Browne is quite the dowdiest in the whole battalion.

Joan Darling.

Second-Lieut.

O.C. Signallers to Quartermaster.

Lance-Corporal Flapper of this section has been charged for bottle, scent, one. In view of the fact that this N.C.O. has not been supplied with bottle since joining this unit I take it that such will be a free issue.

Emma Pipp,

Lieut.

O.C. A Company to Quartermaster.

Please note fact that the boots, khaki suède uppers, pair, one, issued yesterday to 21537 Private B. Prig, are not supplied with regulation Louis-Quinze heels. The boots are therefore herewith returned.

Boadicea Blunt.

Capt. O.C. A Coy.

From O.C. B Company to O.C. D Company.

Herewith A.F.26511, with cheque for pay of 2773, Private O. Jones, B Company, attached D Company, for your attention and necessary action, please.

(Have you heard the absolutely latest? The Major is engaged, and she has asked O.C. C Company and the Quartermaster to be bridesmaids! Not that *I* wanted to take it on. But think of poor *dear* O.C. C! *Won't* she look too-too?)

Mildred Norton,

Capt. O.C. B Coy.

From Adjutant to Lieut. S. O. Marshall.

Please note that you are detailed as a member of a Board of Survey, which ass-embles at these Headquarters on January 31st for the purpose of inquiring into the circumstances whereby box,

Our New Army of Women

powder, face, one, on charge of this unit, became used up suddenly. The Quartermaster will arrange for the necessary witnesses to attend, and the proceedings will be forwarded to the Adjutant in triplicate.

F. E.

Mr. John Inns of Stevenage has just purchased the whole parish of Caldecote; but the report that he had to do this in order to obtain a pound of sugar proves incorrect. (7.3.17.)

THE MUD LARKS

Never have I seen a kiltie platoon wading through the cold porridge of snow and slush of which our front used to be composed, but I have said, with my French blood, '*Mon Dieu, les currents d'air!*' and thank Fate that I belong to a race which reserves its national costume for fancy-dress balls.

It is very well for MacAlpine of Ben Lomond, who has stalked his haggis and devoured it raw, who beds down on thistles for preference and grows his own fur; but it is very hard on Smith of Peckham, who through no fault of his own finds himself in a Highland regiment, trying to make his shirt tails do where his trousers did before. But the real heather-mixture, double-distilled Scot is a hardy bird with different ideas from *nous autres* as to what is cold; also as to what is hot. Witness the trying experience of our Albert Edward.

Our Albert Edward and a Hun rifle grenade arrived at the same place at the same time, intermingled and went down to the Base to be sifted. In the course of time came a wire from our Albert Edward, saying he had got the grenade out of his system and was at that moment at the railhead; were we going to send him a horse or weren't we?

Emma was detailed for the job, which was a mistake, because Emma was not the mount for a man who had been softening for five months in hospital. She had only two speeds in her repertoire,

The Mud Larks

a walk which slung you up and down her back from her ears to her croup, and a trot which jarred your teeth loose and rattled the buttons off your tunic. However, she went to the railhead and Albert Edward mounted her, threw the clutch into the first speed and hammered out the ten miles to our camp, arriving smothered in snow and so stiff we had to lift him down, so raw it was a mockery to offer him a chair, and therefore he had to take his tea off the mantelpiece.

We advised a visit to Sandy. Sandy was the hot-bath merchant. He lurked in a dark barn at the end of the village, and could be found there at any time of any day, brooding over the black cauldrons in which the baths were brewed, his Tam-o'-shanter drooped over one eye, steam condensing on his blue nose. Theoretically the hot baths were free, but in practice a franc pressed into Sandy's forepaw was found to have a strong calorific effect on the water.

So down the village on all fours, groaning like a Dutch brig in a cross sea, went our Albert Edward. He crawled into the dark barn and, having no smaller change, contributed a two-franc bill to the forepaw and told Sandy about his awful stiffness. His eloquence and the double fee broke Sandy's heart. With great tears in his eyes he assured Albert Edward that the utmost resources of his experience and establishment should be mobilised on his (Albert Edward's) behalf, and ushered him tenderly into the hidden chamber, constructed of sacking screens, which was reserved for officers. Albert Edward peeled his clothes gingerly from him, and Sandy returned to his cauldrons.

The peeling complete, Albert Edward sat in the draughts of the inner chamber and waited for the bath. The outer chamber was filled with smoke, and the flames were leaping six feet above the cauldrons; but every time Albert Edward holloaed for his bath Sandy implored another minute's grace.

Finally Albert Edward could stand the draughts no longer and ordered Sandy, on pain of court martial and death, to bring the water, hot or not.

Whereupon Sandy reluctantly brought the buckets along, and, grumbling that neither his experience nor his establishment had had

The Mud Larks

a fair chance, emptied them into the tub. Albert Edward stepped in without further remark and sat down.

The rest of the story I had from my groom and countryman, who, along with an odd hundred other people, happened to be patronizing the outer chamber tubs at the time. He told me that suddenly they heard 'a yowl like a man that's afther bein' bit be a mad dog', and over the screen of the inner chamber came our Albert Edward in his birthday dress. 'Took it in his sthride, sor, an' coursed three laps round the bath-house cursin' the way he'd wither the Divil,' said my groom and countryman; 'then he ran out of the door into the snow an' lay down in it.' He likewise told me that Albert Edward's performance had caused a profound sensation among the other bathers, and they inquired of Sandy as to the cause thereof; but Sandy shook his Tam-o'-shanter and couldn't tell them; hadn't the vaguest idea. The water he had given Albert Edward was hardly scalding, he said; hardly scalding, with barely one packet of mustard dissolved in it.

Our Albert Edward is still taking his meals off the mantelpiece.

I met my friend, the French battery commander, yesterday. He was cantering a showy chestnut mare over the turf, humming a tune aloud. He looked very fit and very much in love with the world. I asked him what he meant by it. He replied that he couldn't help it; everybody was combining to make him happy; his C.O. had fallen down a gun-pit and broken a leg; he had won two hundred francs from his pet enemy; he had discovered a jewel of a cook; and then there was always the Boche, the perfectly priceless, absolutely ridiculous, screamingly funny little Boche. The Boche, properly exploited, was a veritable fount of joy. He dreaded the end of the War, he assured me, for a world without Boches would be a salad sans the dressing.

I inquired as to how the arch-humorist had been excelling himself lately.

The Captain passaged his chestnut alongside my bay, chuckled and told me all about it. It appeared that one wet night he was rung up by the Infantry to say that the neighbouring Hun was up to some funny business, and would he stand by for a barrage, please?

The Mud Larks

What sort of funny business was the Hun putting up?

Oh, a rocket had gone up over the way and they thought it was a signal for some frightfulness or other.

He stood by for half an hour, and then, as nothing happened, turned in. Ten minutes later the Infantry rang up again. More funny business; three rockets had gone up.

He stood by for an hour with no result, then sought his bunk once more, cursing all men. Confound the Infantry getting the jumps over a rocket or two! Confound them two times! Then a spark of inspiration glowed within him, glowed and flamed brightly. If his exalted *poilus* got the wind up over a handful of rockets, how much more also would the deteriorating Boche?

Gurgling happily, he brushed the rats off his chest and the beetles off his face, turned over and went to sleep. Next morning he wrote a letter to his 'godmother' in Paris ('*une petite femme, très intelligente, vous savez*') and then days later her parcels came tumbling in. The first night (a Monday) he gave a modest display, red and white rockets bursting into green stars every five minutes. Tuesday night more rockets, with a few Catherine-wheels thrown in. Wednesday night, Catherine-wheels and golden rain, and so on until the end of the week, when they finished up with a grand special attraction and all-star programme, squibs, Catherine-wheels, Roman candles, Prince of Wales' feathers, terminating in a blinding, fizzing barrage of coloured rockets, and 'God bless our Home' in golden stars.

'All very pretty,' said I, 'but what were the results?'

'Precisely what I anticipated. A deserter came over yesterday who was through it all and didn't intend to go through it again. They had got the wind up properly, he said, hadn't had a wink of sleep for a week. His officers had scratched themselves bald-headed trying to guess what it was all about. All ranks stood to continuously, up to their waists in mud, frozen stiff and half drowned, while *my* brave little rogues of *poilus*, mark you, slept warm in their dug-outs, and the only man on duty was the lad who was touching the fireworks off. O friend of mine, there is much innocent fun to be got out of the Boche if you'll only give him a chance!'

C. G. (Patlander)

The Mud Larks

Brazil has entered the War and Germany is now able to shoot in almost any direction without any risk of hitting a friend. (13.6.17.)

CAUTIONARY TALES FOR THE ARMY

(Private Whidden, who ate his Iron Rations and came to an untimely end)

*Private Tom Whidden had a passion
For eating of his iron ration—
A thing, you know, which isn't done
(Except, just now and then, for fun);
Because there is a rule about it,
And decent people rarely flout it.
But Tom was greedy and each day
He'd put a tin or two away,
Though duty told him, clear and plain,
To keep them safe as brewers' grain,
For eating as a last resort
When eatables were running short.
His Corporal said, 'My lad, don't do it!'
His Sergeant groaned, 'I'm sure you'll rue it!'
But still he never stopped. At last
His Captain heard and stood aghast. . . .
Then he said sternly, 'Private Whidden,
Really, you know, this is forbidden.
Some day, Sir, if you will devour
Your ration thus from hour to hour,
You'll find yourself in No Man's Land
With neither bite nor sup at hand.
Yes, when it is your proper fare,
Your iron ration won't be there;
Then in your hour of bitter need
You will be sorry for your greed.'*

*He ceased. But Private Thomas Whidden
Being thus seriously chidden*

Cautionary Tales for the Army

*Said simply (with a Devon burr),
'Law bless us! do 'ee zay zo, Zur?'
Then, with an uncontrolled passion,
He went and ate his iron ration.
So, since he chose, from day to day,
Persistently to disobey,
As you'd expect, the man is dead,
Though not the way his Captain said.
The fate of starving out of hand,
Or nearly so, in No Man's Land—
Alas! it never came in question.
He died of chronic indigestion.*

W. W. B. F.

THE TAP-ROOM

Our Reserve Battalion has a billiard-room, which is well patronized by all those cheerful souls who have escaped from France without permanent injury and resignedly await the second call.

To-night the 'Tap-room' is in top form. A four-hundred game of snooker is in as rapid progress as is reasonably possible. Every easy-chair is filled with a would-be player offering gratuitous advice in order to speed things up. A young war-scarred Captain is balanced on a rickety side-table, offering odds on the game in a raucous voice. The Mess-waiter strives to be in three places at once. Through all, the players, totally unnerved, play with a desperate attempt at concentration.

Suddenly the door opens, and the Colonel enters, heated and out of breath. His eye pierces through the tobacco smoke and transfixes the unhappy bookmaker. He requests him to take advantage of his position to open a window. The players examine the tips of their cues in sudden silence. The Colonel refuses the offer of six vacated chairs with a slightly impatient negative and inquires as to the probable length of the game. He accepts the obvious untruth that it has just ended, smiles with satisfaction, and proposes to the Adjutant a game of one hundred up.

The Tap-Room

The Colonel, after examining the cues with marked disapproval, eventually selects one of short length and pronounced weight. He then appropriates for his sole personal use the only piece of chalk, demands the spot ball, places it in position, and endeavours to cast his opponent's ball into a baulk pocket with a rapid back-hander. The Adjutant sprints round the table in pursuit.

The Colonel next addresses his own ball and propels it violently against the red, which, taken completely by surprise, bounds with a strong resilience from the top cushion, courses twice up and down the table and comes to a pause in the neighbourhood of the middle pocket. The Colonel tests the elasticity of the cushion with his thumb and gives way a foot to enable his opponent to begin a neat break of twenty-seven.

The Colonel, finding time hanging heavily on his hands, devotes this period to filling his pipe from a borrowed pouch; he then tramps determinedly back to the table and is about to pocket the red from a point of considerable vantage, when the Adjutant deferentially suggests that he is about to play with the wrong ball. The Colonel immediately strides round the table to where his command is clinging to the cushion, lifts the ball to convince himself that there is a spot on its surface, plants it back in a slightly more favourable position, and with one thrust of his cue projects it into open country. He then leaves the table without awaiting the result and resumes his pipe.

The Adjutant now compiles a fifteen break, pauses, notices the Colonel's inattention, and with typical lack of true discipline pots his opponent's ball and leaves the others in baulk. A horrified silence ensues. The Colonel, without noticing the delicacy of the situation, playfully slopes his 'hipe' and marches back to the table. The awful truth is instantly laid bare. The colour of his face becomes of an imperial shade. He dumbly fumbles for his ball, which, with a last bid for exemption, eludes his fingers and rolls under the table.

Taking advantage of this the Colonel, with one glance of concentrated hate in the direction of his opponent, grapples with his choler, and by the time that his ball is returned under escort, has partially recovered himself. He is determined to show to his sub-

The Tap-Room

alternates the value of coolness in an emergency. He places his ball with infinite care and walks round the table to examine the position from every point of view. His next move is to mark out elaborate angles with the assistance of chalk marks on the cushions. Having finally formed all his plans, he encourages his artillery with a few more rounds of chalk, approaches the field with studied and dignified calm, delivers his attack, and retires to watch the effect from his O. Pip.

His command, flying desperately across the open, loses direction, blunders hopelessly into an obstruction on the flank, retires in confusion, and makes a blind despairing dash for a shell-crater. Missing this by a fraction it loses all interest in life, wanders pitifully off at an unnatural angle, runs into the hostile force of the Adjutant, and comes finally into contact with the red.

The Colonel hastens to remark to the enthusiastic audience that this cannon only proves the possibilities of the noble game when accuracy is achieved. It is calculated to improve their marksmanship, to teach them to grasp an opportunity, to apply their tactical training, and to render them cool in the hour of crisis.

Inspired by this truth he attempts to pull off an awkward losing hazard. This effort is ruined by an appalling miss-cue which affects the new cloth. The Colonel justly blames the chalk, removes the pet dog of the battalion from his path with his foot, and makes for the scoring-board. The volunteer marker inadvertently puts the Colonel's modest score on to the large total of the Adjutant.

At this critical moment an orderly fortunately arrives with a note from the Brigade office. The Colonel secures the missive, tears the envelope to shreds, runs his eye over the trivial contents, and curses the War. He then assumes an air of enormous importance, excuses himself, and stamps out into the night.

D. C. E.

A Pittsburgh inventor is reported to have discovered a method of bottling light. If he can bottle anything lighter than the new Government ale his claim to be a wizard is established. (27.7.17.)

The Super-Pipe

THE SUPER-PIPE

When Jackson first joined the jolly old B.E.F. he smoked a pipe. He carried it anyhow. Loose in his pocket, mind you. A pipe-bowl at his pocket's brim a simple pipe-bowl was to him, and it was nothing more. Of course no decent B.E.F. mess could stand that. Jackson was told that a pipe was *anathema maranatha*, which is Greek for *no bon*.

'What will I smoke then?' said Jackson, who was no Englishman. We waited for the Intelligence Officer to reply. We knew him. The Intelligence Officer said nothing. He drew something from his pocket. It was a parcel wrapped in cloth-of-gold. He removed the cloth-of-gold and there was discovered a casket, which he unlocked with a key attached to his identity-disc. Inside the casket was a padlocked box, which he opened with a key attached by gold wire to his advance pay-book. Inside the box was a roll of silk. To cut it all short, he unwound puttee after puttee of careful wrapping till he reached a chamois-leather chrysalis, which he handled with extreme reverence, and from this he drew something with gentle fingers and set it on the tablecloth before the goggle-eyed Jackson.

'A pipe,' said Jackson.

There was a shriek of horror. The Intelligence Officer fainted. Here was wanton sacrilege.

'Man,' said the iron-nerved Bombing Officer, 'it's a Brownhill.'

'What's a Brownhill?' asked Jackson.

We gasped. How could we begin to tell him of that West End shrine from which issue these lacquered symbols of a New Religion?

The Intelligence Officer was reviving. We looked at him.

'The prophet Brownhill,' he said, 'was once a tobacconist—an ordinary tobacconist who sold pipes.'

We shuddered.

'He discovered one day that man wants more than mere pipes. He wants a—a super-pipe, something to reverence and—er—look after, you know, as well as to smoke. So he invented the Brownhill. It is an *affaire de coeur*—an affair of art,' translated the I.O. proudly. 'It is as glossy as a chestnut in its native setting, and you can buy Brownhill furniture polish from the prophet Brownhill which will

The Super-Pipe

keep it always so. It has its year, like a famous vintage, it has a silver wind-pipe, and it costs anything up to fifty guineas.'

'D'you smoke it?' asked Jackson brutally.

We gave it up. In awful silence each of us produced his wrappings and his caskets, extracted the shining briar, smeared it with cosmetics, and polished it more reverently than a peace-time Guardsman polishes his buttons when warned for duty next day at 'Buck'.

And Jackson smoked his pipe in secret. He would take no leaf from the book of the Sassenachs.

And the War went on.

Jackson went on leave. To his deep disgust he had to wait a few hours in London on his way to more civilized parts, and fate led him idling to Brownhill's. He flattened his Celtic nose on the window and stared fascinated at the array of super-pipes displayed there. After a furtive glance along the street he crept into the temple. A white-coated priest met him.

'I—I'm wantin'—a—a pipe,' said Jackson. He saw the priest reel and turn pale to the lips. 'I should say a—a Brownhill,' he added hastily. The other man gulped, steadied himself with an effort, and gave a ghastly smile. If you had walked into a temple in Tibet and planked down sixpence and asked for an idol wrapped up in brown paper you could not have done a more dreadful thing than Jackson had done; but the priest forgave him and produced in silence a trayful of Brownhills. Then was Jackson like unto Elia's little Chinese boy with 'the crackling'. He touched a briar and was converted. He stroked them as though they were kittens, bought ten of them, a pound of polish, fifty silver wind-pipes and a bale of chamois leather. The priest took a deep breath.

'You are a full-blooded man, Sir,' said he, 'if you will excuse me saying so, and you should smoke in your new Brownhills a mixture which has a proportion of Latakia to Virginian of one to nineteen—a small percentage of glycerine and cucumber being added because you have red hair, and the whole submitted to a pressure of eighteen

The Super-Pipe

hundred foot-pounds to the square millimetre, under violet rays. This will be known as "Your Mixture", Number 56785 6/11, and will be supplied to no one else on earth, except under penalty of death.'

'I will take a ton,' said Jackson with glazing eyes.

This was a man after the priest's own heart. He took another deep breath and dived into the strong-room. He returned under the escort of ten armed men, each of them chained by the wrist to an iron box, which he unlocked with difficulty. Inside the iron box was a thing which Jackson a few months ago would have called a pipe. He knew better now. In awful silence the priest lifted it from its satin bed. 'This,' he whispered, 'was once smoked by Brownhill himself.'

Jackson put out a hand to take it. The priest hesitated, then laid it gently on his customer's palm.

And Jackson dropped it.

Jackson has never been heard of since.

T. P. C. W.

People are asking, 'Can there be a hidden brain in the Foreign Office?' (14.11.17.)

OUR INNOCENT SUBALTERNS

The leave-boat had come into port and there was the usual jam around the gangways. On the quay at the foot of one of them was a weary-looking officer performing the ungrateful task of detailing officers for tours of duty among the troops. He had squares of white cardboard in his hand, and here and there, as the officers trooped down the gangway, he picked out a young and inoffensive-looking subaltern and subpœnaed him.

I chanced to notice a young and rosy-cheeked second-lieutenant, innocent of the ways of this rude world, and I knew he was doomed.

As he passed out on to the wharf I saw him receive one of those white cards; he was also told to report to the corporal at the end of the quay.

Our Innocent Subalterns

I saw him slip behind a truck, where he left his bag and haversack, his gloves and his cane, and when he reappeared on the far side he had on his rain-coat, without stars. He had also altered the angle of his cap.

He waited near the foot of the other gangway, which was unguarded. I drew nearer to see what he would do. Presently down the plank came an oldish man—a lieutenant with a heavy moustache and two African ribbons. My young friend stepped forward.

‘You are detailed for duty,’ I heard him say. ‘You will report to the N.C.O. at the end of the quay.’ His intonation was a model for the Staff College.

‘Curse the thing! I knew I should be nabbed for duty,’ I heard the veteran growl as he strode off with the white card. . . .

I met the young man later at the Hotel —, where he had had the foresight to wire for a room. As I had failed to do this, I was glad to avail myself of his kind offer to share his accommodation. After such hospitality I could not refuse him a lift in my car, as we were both bound for the same part of the country.

I did not learn until afterwards that a preliminary chat with my chauffeur had preceded his hospitable advances. Whenever anybody tells me that our subalterns of to-day lack *savoir faire* or that they are deficient in tactical initiative, I tell him that he lies.

H. N. D.

A DEAL WITH CHINA

Fritz having killed the mule, it devolved upon the village Sanitary Inspector to see the carcass decently interred, and on application to the C.O. of the nearest Chinese labour camp I presently secured the services of two beautiful old ivory carvings and a bronze statue, clad in blue quilted uniforms and wearing respectively, by way of head-dress, a towel turban, a straw hat and a coiffure like an early-Victoria penwiper. It was the bronze gentleman—the owner of the noticeable coiffure—who at once really took charge of the working party.

He introduced himself to me as ‘Lurtee Lee’ (his official number

A Deal with China

was thirty-three), informed me he could 'speake! Engliss', and, having by this single utterance at once apparently proved his statement and exhausted his vocabulary, settled down into a rapt and silent adoration of my tunic buttons.

Before we had proceeded thirty yards he had offered me five francs (which he produced from the small of his back) for a single button. At the end of one hundred yards the price had risen to seven twenty-five, and arrived upon the scene of action the Celestial grave-digger made a further bid of eight francs, two Chinese coins (value unknown) and a tract in his native tongue. This being likewise met with a reluctant but unmistakable refusal, the work of excavation was commenced.

Now when three men are employed upon a pit some six feet square they obviously cannot all work at the same time in so confined a space. One man must in turn stand out and rest. His rest time may be spent in divers ways.

The elder of the two ivory carvings spent his breathing spells in philosophic reverie; the younger employed his leisure in rummaging on the neighbouring 'dump' for empty tobacco tins, which he concealed about his person by a succession of feats of legerdemain (by the end of the morning I estimated him to be in possession of about thirty specimens). Lurtee Lee filled every moment of his off time in the manufacture of a quite beautiful pencil-holder—his material an empty cartridge case, his tools a half-brick and a shoeing nail.

Slowly the morning wore on—so slowly, indeed, that at an early period I cast aside my tunic and with spade and pick endeavoured by assistance and example to incite my labourers to 'put a jerk in it'. Noon saw the deceased mule beneath a ton or so of clay, and Lurtee Lee, whether from gratitude or sheer camaraderie, gravely presented me with the now completed pencil-holder. No, not a sou would he accept; I was to take it as a gift.

At this moment a European N.C.O. from the Labour Camp came upon the scene and kindly offered to save me a journey by escorting Lurtee Lee and Company to quarters. They shuffled down the road and I turned to put on my tunic. One button was missing.

L. R. B.

A Deal with China

A painful story comes from the North of England. It appears that a man left his home saying he would obtain a pound of Devonshire butter or die. He was only thirty-four. (19.12.17.)

THE WISE AND FOOLISH VIRGINS

*I knew a Virgin passing Wise;
No one could call her dissipated;
Never her course was known to drift
From those high principles of thrift
With which, in case of rainy skies,
Her brain had been inoculated.*

*She husbanded her frugal store;
Her lamp with oil was well provided;
So were her tins of sprat-sardines—
Not stocked in view of submarines,
But garnered prior to the War
Against whatever chance betided.*

*I knew a Foolish Virgin, too,
With habits nothing like so proper;
Her lamp was woolly round the wick;
She lived from hand to mouth on tick;
Her ready cash she always blew,
And never saved a single copper.*

*From letting things serenely go
No fear of stringent times debarred her;
If but to-day supplied good fare
The morrow for itself might care,
And consequently there were no
Sardines collected in her larder.*

*Which was the better Virgin? She
Who made of life a game of skittles,*

The Wise and Foolish Virgins

*Reckless of Want that follows Waste;
Or else who resolutely faced
The problems of economy
And practised Virtue with her victuals?*

*Alas! the latter Virgin's found
Inferior in the moral order;
Her dozen tins of sprat-sardines
Have been a source of painful scenes
And Rhondda's fined her fifty pound
As a confirmed and shameless hoarder.*

O. S.



There was once: 1. A private who knew the name of the next village. 2. An A.S.C. merchant who never referred to the day the shell burst in his horse-lines. 3. A French civilian who did not know the destination of the battalion before they did themselves. 4. An R.T.O. who put people in the right train. 5. A subaltern who got married to a girl he knew. (17.4.18.)



THE MUD LARKS

Our squadron is at the present moment billeted in what the house-agents would describe as a 'unique old-world property', a ramshackle pile which looks like a palace from the south and a work-house from the north.

It commenced its career, back in the long ago, as a glorified week-end bungalow for Doges. In course of time it became a monastery.

When the pious monks took over they got busy with whitewash and obliterated most of the Doges' sportive mural decorations. Most, but not all.

Methinks the Abbot had tripped the boulevards in his youth and he spared some of the brighter spots of the more sportive frescoes in

The Mud Larks

memory of old times and to keep his heart up during Lent. Anyhow they are still there.

To-day our long-faced chums champ their feeds in cloisters where once the good monks told their beads, and our bold sergeant boys quaff their tonics beneath a painted ceiling whereon Rackham satyrs are depicted chivvying Kirchner nymphs across a Leader landscape.

A small portion of one immense wing is inhabited by a refugee lady, who had retired in good order, haling the whole menagerie along with her, calves, fowls, children, donkey, piebald pig and all.

When first we came into residence here we heard strange nocturnal swishings and shufflings overhead, where none should be, and attributed them to the ghost of the Abbot, who had returned from Purgatory with a bucket of lime and was striving to wash out his former lapses. Later on we discovered it was the calves, who from inscrutable motives of their own prefer living in the attics. How Mrs. Refugee hoisted them up there in the first place and how she proposes to get them down again when they ripen are questions she alone can answer, but will never do so because we haven't enough Italian to ask her.

The piebald pig is supported entirely by voluntary contributions, and, like many other such institutions, keeps frequent fasts. When he retreated here there was no sty to accommodate him; but Mrs. Refugee, with the practical originality that distinguishes her, routed out a retired dog-kennel from somewhere and anchored him to it. This has had the effect of creating in him a dual personality.

Sometimes he thinks he is just fat old Dolce F. Niente the pig, and behaves as such, and one can tread all over him without disturbing his melodious slumbers. At others the collar and chain prey on his mind and he imagines he is Patriae Defensor the trusty watchdog, and mows down* all comers.

The children and fowls are doing nicely. They speedily discovered what innumerable fowls and children all the world over had discovered before them, namely, that the turtle-dove is a wild beast compared with the British warrior and his war-horse, and they victimize the defenceless creatures accordingly.

The result is that the Atkinses get only what husks of rations the

The Mud Larks

children have neglected, and the fowls only allow the hairies what oats they cannot possibly stagger away with.

Antonio Giuseppe the donkey was also a war profiteer. Commerce might stagnate, armies clash and struggle, nations bleed to death, he did not care. '*Viva la guerra!*' said Antonio Giuseppe. 'As long as there is a British unit handy to dine out with I'm all for it.' These sentiments, though deplorable, were not without reason, for until we came I very much doubt if he had ever had a full meal—a real rib-straining blow-out—in his life.

He was a miserable little creature, standing about a yard high by six inches broad. By tucking in his tail he could have passed for a rabbit at any fancy-dress ball. His costume was a patchwork affair of hairy tufts and bare spaces. I think he must have been laid away in a drawer without camphor at one time and been mauled by a moth.

A disreputable ragamuffin person was Antonio Giuseppe the donkey, but for all that he had a way with him, and was in his day the Light-weight Champion Diner-out of all Italy—probably of the world.

At night he reposed in the kitchen along with Mrs. Refugee, the *bambini* and fowls. The day he spent in his observation post, lurking behind a screen of mulberries and vines, keeping a watchful eye on the horses.

As soon as their nosebags were on he commenced to move stealthily towards the lines, timing himself to arrive just as the nosebags came off and the hay-nets went up. He then glided softly between the horses and helped himself. Being tiny and very discreet he frequently passed unobserved, but should the line-guard spot him he had his plan of action.

Oft-times have I seen a perspiring and blasphemous trooper pursuing the winged Antonio Giuseppe round the lines with a stable broom; but when the broom descended Antonio Giuseppe was not there to receive it. He would nip under the breast-rope, slip in under one horse's belly and out between the legs of another, dodging through and round the astounded animals like a half-back through a loose scrum or a greased pig at a fair, snatching a generous contribution from each hay-net as he passed. Under this method Antonio

The Mud Larks

throve and throve; but the tale of splintered brooms grew and grew and the Quartermaster loved me not.

Yesterday the General intimated that he'd like to inspect us. Always eager to oblige, we licked, polished, brushed and burnished ourselves, pipe-clayed our head-ropes, pomaded our moustaches, powdered our noses and paraded.

We paraded to-day in regimental column in a field west of our palace-workhouse and sat stiff in our saddles, the cheerful sunshine glowing on leather-work, glinting on brass and steel, conscious that we could give any Beauty Chorus a run for its money.

There sounded a shrill fanfaronade of trumpets, tootling the salute, and a dazzle of gold and scarlet, like a Turner sunset, blazed into view—the General and his Staff.

At the same moment Antonio Giuseppe espied us from his observation post and, getting it into his head that we were picnicking out (it was about lunch-time), hastened to join us. As the General reached the leading squadron Antonio reached the near squadron, and, sliding unobtrusively into its ranks, looked about for the hay-nets.

However, the Second-in-Command noticed his arrival and motioned to his trumpeter. The trumpeter spurred forward and pinked Antonio Giuseppe in the hindquarters with his sword-point as a hint to him to move on. Antonio, thinking the line-guards were upon him and with a new type of broom, loosed a squeal of agony and straightway commenced his puss-in-the-corner antics in and out and round about the horses' legs. They didn't like it at all; it tickled and upset them; they changed from the horizontal to the vertical, giggled and pawed the air.

Things were becoming serious. A hee-hawing tatterdemalion donkey, playing 'ring o' roses' with a squadron of war-horses, tickling them into hysterics, detracts from the majesty of such occasions and is no fit spectacle for a General. A second trumpeter joined in the chase and scored a direct prick on the soft of Antonio Giuseppe's nose as he dived out under the tail of a plunging gun-mare. Antonio whipped about and fled towards the centre squadron, ears wobbling, braying anguished S.O.S.s. The two trumpeters,

The Mud Larks

young and ardent lads, thundered after him, swords at the engage, racing each other, knee to knee for first blood. They scored simultaneously on the butt of his tail, and Antonio, stung to the quick, shot clean through (or rather under) the centre squadron into the legs of the General's horse, tripping up that majestic animal and bringing the whole stately edifice ruining down into a particularly muddy patch of Italy.

Tremendous and awful moment! As my groom and countryman expressed it, 'Ye cud hear the silence for miles'. The General did not break it. I think his mouth was too full of mud and loose teeth for words. He arose slowly out of the ooze like an old walrus lifting through a bed of seaweed black as death, slime dripping from his whiskers, and limped grimly from the field, followed by his pallid staff proffering handkerchiefs and smelling-salts. But I understand he became distinctly articulate when he got home, and the upshot of it is that we are to be put in the forefront of the nastiest battle that can be arranged for us.

And Antonio Giuseppe the donkey, author of all the trouble, what of him? you ask.

Antonio Giuseppe the donkey will never smile again, dear reader. With his edges trimmed and 'Welcome' branded across his back he may serve as a mangy doormat for some suburban maisonette, but at the present moment he lies in the mud of the parade-ground, as flat as a sole on a sand-bank, waiting for someone to roll him up and carry him away.

When a full-fed Major-General falls he falls heavily.¶

C. G. (*Patlander*)

We gather from the Spanish Government that the report of the escape of the U.56 from Santander is premature. (5.6.18.)

THE SINCEREST FORM OF FLATTERY

'Hullo, my boy-ee!' came from the O.P. to the battery; 'that you, Mumbo-o?'

The Sincerest Form of Flattery

And then suddenly the voice changed to a deep basso profundo: 'Oom-ah—your—Commander—salutes you!'

'And *who* are you, my good man?' replied Mumbo in a voice evidently meant for a counter-imitation of the same voice, although it lacked something in timbre—'*who* are you? Oom-ah, yes, the Forward Observer. Do you know what you are, my good fellow? You are the eyes of the guns—remember that. Shake hands with me. Now write home and tell your people about it.'

'Rotten; absolutely rotten imitation; not a bit like him,' came from the O.P. 'Now listen to me.'

But Mumbo did not listen, for, turning, he had caught sight of a pair of splendid sparkling field-boots descending into the dug-out. Breathlessly he waited for the rest to appear. Heavens! it was the Great One himself.

'Well, my boy,' said the well-known voice, 'and where is your Battery Commander?'

'He's visiting the battalions, Sir,' said Mumbo, thanking Heaven that probably the gas-proofing blanket had prevented his being overheard.

'Ooom-ah!' (Heavens! it *was* like Steve's imitation, astonishingly so.) 'Sorry to have missed him. Tell your Battery Commander that your General has visited the battery. Let all the men whom I have not seen know that I, their General, have visited them.'

'Burr-burr!' went the telephone.

'Oom-ah! what is that?'

'Only the O.P., Sir.'

'Ah, the Forward Observer. Let me speak to him. Are you there?'

'Is that you, Mumbo?' called Steve in the distance.

'No, no, my boy,' roared the General heartily, 'this is not—oom-ah—Mumbo; it is your General speaking. It is your General ringing up to congratulate you personally. You, my boy, are the eyes of the guns, remember that—'

'Rotten,' was the word that cut short his eulogy. 'Rotten, old son; not a bit like it.'

'What!' The pained surprise in the General's voice sent a cold shiver down Mumbo's back.

The Sincerest Form of Flattery

'Not a bit like it,' reiterated Steve decisively.

'Not a bit like what, Sir? Do you know who I am? It is I, your General, ringing up——'

'Oh, chuck it, old bird; you'll damage your larynx.'

'What—what the *devil* do you mean, Sir?'

'That's a bit better,' admitted Steve grudgingly. 'You've got the intonation all right; but the voice, my boy, *the voice*—put more *body* into it, try a little E.F.C. port.'

'I—I—I——' began the General.

'No, no, no, don't hurry it; do it by numbers. On the command "One", lay back your head on your collar; "Two," press down the uvula; "Three," open the mouth wide and—and pull the string, as it were, and let the voice *roll* out from the chest.'

'*Look* here, Sir——'

'No, no, you'll never do it like that. *Listen to this now*: Oom-ah, and *who* are you, my boy?' (and at the sound of his own voice apparently, the General started violently). 'A sentry? No, my boy, you are *more than that*, my boy. You—are one—of the furthest outposts—of the whole—British—Empire, my boy! Remember that. I, your General—salute you! That's a bit more like it—what?' he broke off triumphantly.

'Confound your impertinence!' came the full-blooded explosion of wrath.

'Ha! ha! Splendid—that's *ever* so much better, old cock.'

'What!' the tone rose to a squeak.

'There, now you've gone off again,' said a disappointed voice. 'You must—lay—your—head—back on your collar and——'

'Cease this damnable impersonation, Sir.'

'Damnable! It's better than you could ever get it, anyway.'

But Heaven in its mercy, through the medium of the infamous Hun, decreed that a perfectly good General should not throw away his life in a mere attempt to express the inexpressible. At that moment the line to the O.P. went to bits.

It appeared (after a befitting pause) that the General had a sense of humour. He admitted as much; he also stated that he could always see a joke, even against himself; but just as Mumbo was beginning

The Sincerest Form of Flattery

to breathe more freely it also began to appear that this was not one of those particular jokes. It was in fact a clear case in which disciplinary action should be taken. Discipline, he feared, seemed to be lacking throughout the whole battery.

Meantime, far off, and by devious routes unknown to Great Ones, there scurried an orderly, hot and perspiring, to bring the news to the O.P. that it had been the General himself speaking and that a personal visit to the O.P. was projected. It was a lonely and depressed Mumbo who returned to the dug-out after seeing a suspiciously polite General off the premises.

Burr-burr—through at last to the O.P.! A gleam came into Mumbo's eyes. The opportunity was too good to be missed, and the General could not be at the O.P. for half an hour at least.

'Hullo-oo! Is that D.K.?'

'Is that O.P.?' said Mumbo gruffly.

'Yes, who—who is that?' asked Steve with extraordinary politeness.

'It is I, your General, speaking,' said Mumbo ominously.

'Oh! I—I—I'm sorry, Sir. I'm afraid I didn't know your voice just now.'

'Oom-ah! You seemed to have a very fair idea of it,' replied Mumbo, grinning at the absolutely helpless humility in the other's tone.

'I—I'm sorry, Sir. I—I had no idea you were coming to us, Sir. I mean to say, as they had been shelling us, I—I couldn't possibly expect that you would.'

'Confound it!' roared Mumbo, 'do you think that I, your General, fear to go where my men can go? Do you think that if my place were not elsewhere I should wish to be anywhere but in the line?'

'I'm—I'm sorry, Sir. I didn't mean that——'

'Then what the devil did you mean?'

'I—I don't know, Sir. I'm awfully sorry, Sir. I hope you won't take it as disrespectful, Sir; it was only a joke, Sir—bad joke of course, Sir, but meant—er—kindly, you know, Sir. I'm sure we're all very proud that you should come to see us, especially when there's shelling going on—no, I don't mean that; I mean we're glad

The Sincerest Form of Flattery

you're here because the enemy's shelling—or rather we're glad they're shelling because you're here—that is, I'm sure you would—er—come through *a barrage*, Sir, to see us if you thought we'd like it——'

This was too much.

'Idiot!' howled Mumbo in his own voice. 'Who said my imitation wasn't any good?'

'What—is that Mumbo? I say, wasn't it *awful*? Did he catch you at it?'

'No, I'm all right, but you're for it, my boy,' gloated Mumbo; 'he was very nice to me, but I expect he's saving all the other things for you. Did you tell the old boy to lay his head back and get it off his chest?'

'Lordy, I told him to try E.F.C. port for his voice.'

'If you could have seen his face—'Oom-ah! disgraceful. Thank God I can see a joke, even against myself—oom-ah, but this is no joke, as that young officer will find out—oom-ah! Steve, your Commander *degums* you, my boy-ee. Now—now write home and tell your people about *that*!'

'Oh, shut up. I say—(pause)—I say, Mumbo.' (No answer.) 'Mumb-o-o-o! Where are—you-oo?'

But answer came there none. For standing in the doorway was the Battery Commander, and behind him? Behind him was the General himself!

W. P. L.

Milk, it is announced, may now be sold by the pennyworth. The price of a pennyworth will continue to be threepence halfpenny as before. (3.7.18.)

THE LANGUAGE DIFFICULTY

The servant question has reached India. I discovered it when I arrived here on leave and acquired the only available attendant, a Tamil youth who knows no English and very little of anything else.

The Language Difficulty

I imagine that it is only the general scarcity of everything, including servants, which has emboldened Moonuswamy to offer himself as dressing-boy even to that predestined employer of the incapable, the 'Arficer Jintlman from Basra'.

Leave is too short and far too precious to permit of my making any attempt to learn a language which offers for the simple obvious word 'is' *i—s, is*, the horrible polysyllable *irrekeradu*. One lesson in Tamil decided me on that point. But the language of signs has its limitations, and things were rapidly reaching an impasse when Moonuswamy produced the *Domestics' Manual*. It was not an inviting book as it lay amid the dust and crumbs of Moonuswamy's favourite tin salver, and I gazed with a cold reluctance at first upon the lavish grease-spots which darkened its brown-paper wrapper. Then, grunting strange Tamil grunts in disapproval of my apathy, Moonuswamy laid it open and pointed proudly to the parallel columns of Tamil and English wherein were to be found just those useful and intimate remarks which he and I were longing to exchange.

For a time mine was the joy with which *Crusoe* must first have heard *Friday* speak; but as the days go by I realize that the manual has not given me all I hoped. Its value to us is limited by Moonuswamy's lack of intellect.

The leader of the dialogues is a person of a vagrant and vacillating habit of mind, who constantly introduces a subject only to let it drop again at once in the most irritating way; still, when I do light upon what I want I am able to read the English at a glance and point to the Tamil counterpart with the severity which the occasion may demand. Moonuswamy, on the other hand, has intense difficulty in spelling out the Tamil to which I have referred him, and if it is pretty to see the triumph grow in his face as he strings his horrid sounds together and discovers that they are really making words, it is pitiful to watch it fade when he realizes that all told they represent 'There is no oil in the lamp', or, if I am unable to find the appropriate words for a more definite charge, 'You are not a very clever boy'.

But it is over his answers that Moonuswamy gets into the most

The Language Difficulty

serious difficulty. Unable to read rapidly enough he notes the position of my accusation and trusts to the next consecutive sentence to furnish the fitting excuse. In this he is not often lucky, because the antiphonist of the book, like the leader, is given to a reckless irrelevance. But also Moonuswamy seldom misses the mark by less than a couple of lines—a serious miss when topics change so quickly and completely as those of the Manual—and oftener than not goes wider still.

Only yesterday, for instance, when I approached him with a buttonless shirt and pointed severely to the remark, 'The handle of this thing is broken' (the most suitable reproof which I could find at the moment), the fellow missed three sentences and indicated the absurd reply: '*To have you with me will be a hindrance to my work.*'

This morning, again, I burst out of my room and found Moonuswamy squatted on his heels beside an undarned pile of socks, breathing stertorously as he bent over the Manual. I seized it, and, having hurriedly invited his attention to the inaccurate statement, 'To-day, I am to take physic', and then to the more truthful but equally irrelevant appeal, 'You know that I am a family man', I found what I wanted and pointed indignantly to the words, 'This water is not hot.'

Moonuswamy mouthed laboriously over the Tamil in a guttural whisper and two minutes later laid a black-tipped olive finger upon the comment: '*On this account he is cross and a little feverish.*'

He had lost his place again and was referring me to the matter of baby's teething, which occurs suddenly a little farther on. I snatched the book and turned to the dog's-eared page on which is to be found the safe and almost universal appeal: 'If you do not see to everything, who else will?'

This never fails to rouse in him an almost tearful anxiety to please me. He took up the jug and went in search of hotter water, pausing only to turn a page and plant his left thumb for a moment upon the unexpected sentiment: '*Nothing that is impure will enter Heaven.*'

Brooding over the precise interpretation to put upon this I looked for the more strictly literary portion of the Manual which lies towards the end of the book, and had just discovered some entranc-

The Language Difficulty

ing proverbs when Moonuswamy returned with his little jug of lukewarm water.

“Even a rat has five wives in harvest time,” I murmured, my eyes on the book, wondering whether this is indeed a zoological fact; and then Moonuswamy, panting respectfully over my shoulder, pointed further down the page. I looked and read: *‘Will the temple cat worship the deity?’*

I think of reverting to the language of signs.

MRS. M.

A correspondent would like to hear from any man who contemplates striking a match in the South Kensington neighbourhood with a view to sharing same. (4.9.18.)

HISTORY IN THE MAKING

The following retrospective journal, which does not claim a precise accuracy about the order of events, represents a rough palimpsest of the impressions left on the brain of an average reader by the reports, anticipations and contradictions of the Press during the course of the last few weeks.

Monday.—The Wolff Bureau reports that the Allies have sustained the usual number of sanguinary repulses.

Tuesday.—Ludendorff urges the necessity for an armistice.

Wednesday.—Germany becomes a Democracy.

Thursday.—Ludendorff protests against the idea of an armistice.

Friday.—Ludendorff resigns. The Kaiser accepts Ludendorff's resignation.

Saturday.—The Kaiser abdicates. Ludendorff accepts the Kaiser's abdication.

Sunday.—The Socialist party in the Reichstag demands the abdication of the Kaiser. The Kaiser says he will be damned first.

Monday.—The Socialist party in the Reichstag retorts that,

History in the Making

whether the Kaiser is damned first or last, he will be damned anyhow and had better get it over at once.

Tuesday.—The Kaiser abdicates.

Wednesday.—The German Government informs President Wilson that it is now in a position to negotiate with him as a full-blown Democracy. President Wilson doesn't believe it.

Thursday.—The Kaiser indicates that he is entirely at the people's disposal, and will abdicate or not according as it suits the wishes of the Fatherland.

Friday.—The Socialist Party in the Reichstag replies that it is a matter of absolute indifference to the German Democracy whether the Kaiser elects to abdicate or not.

Saturday.—The Kaiser abdicates.

Sunday.—The German Democracy becomes a Limited Monarchy. Imperial Crown offered to Crown Prince's adolescent son. The Crown Prince is not consulted in the matter.

Monday.—The Kaiser announces that, if it would suit the convenience of the Reichstag, he will consent to keep on for a bit at whatever personal inconvenience.

Tuesday.—Kaiser Karl abdicates after removing the family jewels.

Wednesday.—Kaiser William remarks that it was a dirty trick on the part of Kaiser Karl to desert a brother-monarch. He (Kaiser William) would sooner perish at the head of his conquering army.

Thursday.—Tsar Boris abdicates.

Friday.—Kaiser William wires to Tino to secure for him the second-best Royal Suite at the Hotel des Rois en Exil, Switzerland. Kaiser Karl continues to abdicate.

Saturday.—Kaiser William makes alternative arrangements to lease a château in Sweden.

Sunday.—The Higher Command declares that the Fatherland will fight to its last Hun. Uninterrupted continuation of Peace pourparlers.

Monday.—The Kaiser abdicates.

Tuesday.—The Socialist party in the Reichstag reminds the Kaiser that he has hitherto ignored its invitation to him to abdicate. The Kaiser reminds the Socialist party in the Reichstag that he has

History in the Making

already abdicated four times and that there must be a limit somewhere. Penultimate abdication of the Kaiser.

Wednesday.—The Kaiser withdraws by stealth to Headquarters in the dead of night.

Thursday.—The Kaiser arrives openly at Headquarters in his capacity of War Lord. The Higher Command comments favourably on the robust and cheerful appearance of the All-Highest.

Friday.—The Kaiser compliments his Army on its recent triumphs and orders a white flag.

Saturday.—The Kaiser abdicates for the last time.

Sunday.—The consensus of opinion among German financiers, anxious to cut their losses, is that it is high time the Kaiser abdicated.

Monday.—The well-informed *Frankfurter Zeitung* states that in the matter of the Kaiser's rumoured abdication nothing whatever has occurred beyond 'suggestions by suitable persons with a view to procuring an expression of the Kaiser's will'.

Tuesday.—The Kaiser announces that his will remains the supreme law and that while ready to do anything in reason to facilitate the establishment of a German Democracy he draws the line firmly at abdication.

Wednesday.—Positively final abdication of the Kaiser.

Thursday.—Arrival of the German *parlementaires* under a white flag in the French lines. Armistice signed at London offices of a Press Agency.

Friday.—Armistice remains unsigned.

Saturday.—The War goes on as usual.

O. S.

A Conscientious Objector in Ireland has just been arrested for illegal drilling. (9.10.18.)

THE RESCUE

Jackson and Johnston were made from the stuff of heroes. I do not give their correct names because they hate publicity like the plague, but they had to be called something.

The Rescue

Jackson was a pilot and Johnston an observer. They used to fly in an antiquated seaplane, waste petrol and destroy wireless sets.

Convoying and anti-submarine patrolling constituted the work upon which they were alleged to be engaged, and one fine morning they set forth to down some careless Hun. They should have known instinctively that fate held nothing good in store for them, because the engine started at the first attempt, a thing which had never happened before, and they 'took off' with the damage amounting to only a punctured tail-float and a few broken bracing-wires.

The engine was running wonderfully and must have been firing on no fewer than six of the nine cylinders, and this after an hour's flight. The thing was unheard of.

Then the sixth cylinder went out on strike (sympathetic) and the seaplane began to descend. Johnston, acting on painfully gained experience, offered up a prayer and waited for the worst.

Any book dealing with seaplanes will tell you that the floats are for alighting on, and there are instructors who do nothing but show one how it is done. Jackson, however, had ideas of his own, and that was no doubt the reason why he chose to alight on the plane's nose in preference to its floats.

In this way the machine entered the water and then turned over on its back and threw observer Johnston out into the main. Meanwhile Jackson had managed to extract himself from the top plane and dived bravely to rescue his observer.

Then Johnston rose to the surface and found his pilot missing, and dived to pluck him from a watery grave.

With his lungs bursting and his head swimming Jackson gave up the search and ascended to get a breath of fresh air; but every moment was of value in a case like this and he dived again.

A second or two later Johnston's head emerged for a breath. He was a brave and determined fellow. Never would he give up until every ray of hope had vanished. So he plunged under again, and this time clutched hold of Jackson, and Jackson of him.

Johnston was elated; so was Jackson. Each had effected a rescue; so each was a hero. Under this common impression they arrived together at the surface.

The Rescue

'Don't struggle,' gasped Johnston, 'you're safe.'
'Cling to the floats,' ordered Jackson; 'you're rescued.'
'Brain affected,' muttered Johnston.
'Must be wandering,' murmured Jackson.

Do not mention rescues to Jackson or to Johnston, if you value either your personal beauty or your comfort.

R. H. S. C.

The American Press is losing its grip. Only five hundred representatives sailed for the Peace Conference. (18.12.18.)

MORE REPRISALS

That ass Ellis is a poor creature, and, like the poor, he is always with me. I think he is a punishment inflicted upon me for some past error.

A short time ago I caught the 'flu'. Naturally the first person I suspected was Ellis, but I am bound to confess that I have not been able to prove it. Indeed, when he followed me to hospital two days later and was put in the next bed, I felt justified in exonerating him altogether.

The first remark that he made, when he reached that stage of the complaint where you feel like making remarks, illustrates just the kind of man he is. He accused *me* of giving the thing to *him*!

I answered his outburst with the scorn it deserved.

'Preposterous,' I said.

I added a few apposite remarks, to which he responded as best he could. But, medically speaking, I was two days senior to him, so that when the Sister heard the uproar and bustled up it was he who was forbidden to speak. She then proceeded to clinch the matter by inserting a thermometer in his mouth. I defy any man to argue under such a handicap.

I finished all I had to say and relapsed into an expectant silence. The Sister returned after a time, read the instrument and retired

More Reprisals

without a word. As she passed my bed I saw out of the corner of my eye that Ellis was watching feverishly. An inspiration seized me. I stopped her, and in a low voice asked if she had fed her rabbits. Sister isn't allowed to keep rabbits, but she does. As I hoped, she put a finger to her lips, nodded and walked away.

'Poor old man,' I murmured vaguely to the ward in general. 'A hundred and seven and still rising! Poor old Ellis!'

Ellis gave a little moan and collapsed under the bedclothes.

An hour later Burnett went his round, Burnett isn't the doctor, at least not the official one. I must tell you something about Burnett.

He is the grandfather of the ward. Though quite a young man he has grown fat through long lying in bed. He entered hospital, I understand, towards the end of 1914, suffering from influenza. Since then he has had a nibble at every imaginable disease, not to mention a number of imaginary ones as well. Regularly four times a day he would waddle round the ward in his dingy old dressing-gown, discussing symptoms with every cot. In exchange for your helping of pudding he would take your temperature and let you know the answer, and for a bunch of grapes he would tell you the probable course of your complaint and the odds against complete recovery. No one seemed to interfere with him. You see, Burnett was no longer a case; he was an institution.

He spent a long time by Ellis's bedside. I suspect Ellis wasn't feeling much like pudding at the moment. I couldn't hear very well what was going on, but Ellis was chattering as only Ellis can, and the comfortable Burnett was apparently soothing him with an occasional, 'All right, old man, I'll see what I can do for you.'

At length the grapes were all consumed and the huge form of Burnett loomed above me.

'Why, Mr. L——,' said the soothing voice, 'I don't want to alarm you, but really——'

'Really what?' I cried, starting up in bed at the gravity of his tone.

'Well, you know—your colour; I perhaps——'

He fumbled in the folds of his voluminous gown and produced a small metal mirror. Then he seemed to change his mind and put it back again.

More Reprisals

'I'd better not,' he said softly to himself, and then louder to me, 'Have you got a wife—or perhaps a mother?'

I am no coward, but I confess I was trembling at this.

'Why!' I cried. 'Do you think I ought to send for them?'

'Send for them?' he echoed. '*Send for them?* And you in the grip of C.S.M.! It would be sheer madness—murder!'

The cold sweat stood out upon my brow but I kept my head.

'Have an apple, won't you, Mr. Burnett?'

He selected the largest and began to munch it in silence—silence, that is, as far as talking was concerned.

'Tell me,' I stammered; 'wh—what is C.S.M.? And may I have a look at myself?'

He cogitated. 'Shall I?' he muttered. 'Yes, I think he ought to know.' Then quite quietly, accompanied by the core of the apple, there fell from his lips the fatal word, 'Cerebro-spinal meningitis.'

At the same time he handed me the glass and selected the next best apple.

I looked at myself. My hair stood straight on end, my face was whitish-yellow, my eyes blazed with unmistakable fever. A three-days' beard enhanced the horrible effect.

'Have you any pain—there?' One of his large soft hands gripped my side and pinched it hard, the other selected the third best apple.

'Yes,' I groaned, 'I *had* pain there.'

'Ah!' he shook his head. 'And there?' He sat down heavily on my right ankle. He is a ponderous man.

'Agony,' I moaned.

'Ah! And something throbbing like a gong in the brain?' he inquired, tapping me on the head with the metal mirror.

I nodded dumbly. He rose, shrugging his shoulders.

'All the symptoms, I'm afraid. That's just how it took poor old Simpson. He had this very cot—let me see, back in '16, I suppose. I had it very slightly afterwards—it was touch and go; I was the only one they pulled through—but I had it *very* slightly, you understand—not like that. But cheer up, old man. I've been told that a fellow got through it in the next ward—of course he's an idiot now, but he didn't *die*. I don't suppose you'll be wanting the rest of these

More Reprisals

apples, will you? All right; don't mention it,' and he passed on to the next cot.

When the proper doctor came round a few minutes later (Burnett says) he found his own thermometer quite inadequate and had to borrow the one that registers the heat of the ward. When he took it out of my mouth it wasn't far short of boiling-point, and he wrote straight off to *The Lancet* about it; also they had to get one of those lightning calculator chaps down to count my pulse.

Long before I came to, Ellis had been discharged, the ward had filled up with fresh cases (except Burnett, of course), and the Armistice had been signed.

When I was well enough they handed me a letter which Ellis had left for me.

'Dear L——' (it ran)—'Yes, the rabbits have had their food. The biggest of them swallowed it all most satisfactorily.

'Your loving
Ellis.'

M. A. L.

'While saying "Thank you" to a customer,' says a news item, 'a Wallasey butcher fell unconscious.' In our neighbourhood it used to be, until quite lately, the customer who fell unconscious. (22.1.19.)

OUR BEAUTY COLUMN

(*Latest Style*)

We four are *such* friends, Estelle, Rosalie, Beryl and I. If we weren't could we sit round and say the things to each other that we do? I ask you.

It's quite a small flat we have, just the one room, but it's *so* convenient. There's a chemist's next door, so it's no walk to get *everything* we require.

We were sitting round our cosy fireplace, wishing it were summer or that we had some coal, when one of those thoughts that make me so loved occurred to me.

Our Beauty Column

'Estelle darling,' I asked, though I knew, because the box was on the mantelpiece, 'how *do* you get that lovely flush? Your nose is such a *delicious* tint; it reminds me of a tomato.'

'I owe my colour to my fur coat,' replied Estelle frankly; 'you've no idea how warm it keeps me. I think a natural glow is so much more becoming than an artificial one.'

'By the way, Madge,' put in Rosalie (*I'm Madge*), 'as you've started the game may I ask you a question? How do you get that lovely shine on *your* nose?'

'Chamois leather,' I replied sweetly. (You see we're such friends we love telling each other our boudoir secrets.)

'I wish I knew how you keep those cunning little curls, Estelle,' sighed Beryl longingly. '*My* hair is so horribly straight.'

'It's quite easy,' explained Estelle; 'you can do it with any ordinary flat-iron, though of course an electric iron is best. If you heat the iron over the gas or fire (if any) it gets sooty, and if you've golden hair, as I have this year—well. Only,' she went on warningly, 'always see that you lay your curl flat on the table before you iron it.'

'I wish I could get my hands as white as yours, Beryl,' I said.

'You can't expect to, darling; working at Whitehall as you do your fingers are bound to get stained with nicotine. Warm water and soap is all *I* use. First I immerse my hands in tepid water, then I rub the soap (you can get it at any chemist's or oil-shop) into the pores—you'd be surprised how it lathers if you do it the right way—and then I rinse the soap off again. I learnt that trick from watching our washerwoman—she has such lovely hands.'

'Why do you never use powder now, Estelle?' asked Rosalie. 'Before the War one could never come near you without leaving footprints.'

'My reasons were partly patriotic, conserving the food-supply, you know, and partly owing to the mulatto-like tint the war flour gave me. One doesn't want to go about looking half baked, does one?'

'No,' we murmured, making a pretty concerted number of it.

'But wrinkles, darling Estelle,' I pleaded—'do tell us what you do for your wrinkles.'

Our Beauty Column

'Wrinkles,' murmured Estelle, with a pretty puckering of her brow—'I haven't any left; I've given them all to you.'

(Editorial Note.—This series will not be continued in our next issue.)

F. H. D.

In connection with the offers for Drury Lane Theatre it appears that one of the would-be purchasers declares that he was more syndicate than sinning. (5.2.19.)

PROPAGANDA IN THE BALKANS

At the end of September last those whom we in Macedonia had come to regard as our deadly enemies became our would-be friends with a suddenness which was almost painful. Kultur is a leavening influence, and our spurious local Hun in Bulgaria is every bit as frightful in war and as oily in defeat as the genuine article on the Rhine.

To escape this unfamiliar and rather overpowering atmosphere of friendliness our section of the Salonica Force immediately made for the nearest available enemy and found ourselves at a lonely spot on the Turkish frontier. The name of the O.C. Local Bulgars began with Boris, and he was a *Candidat Offizier* or Cadet, and acting Town Major. As an earnest of good will, he showed us photos of his home, before and after the most recent *progom*, and of his grandfather, a bandit with a flourishing practice in the Philippopolis district, much respected locally.

We took up our dispositions, and shortly all officers were engaged sorting out the suspicious characters arrested by the sentries. It was in this way that I became acquainted with Serge Gotastich the Serb.

When he was brought before me I sent for Aristides Papazaphiropoulos, our interpreter, and in the meantime delivered a short lecture to the Sergeant-Major, Quartermaster-Sergeant and Storeman on the inferiority of the Balkan peoples, with particular reference to the specimen before us, to whom, in view of the fact that he seemed

Propaganda in the Balkans

a little below himself, I gave a tot of rum. He eyed it with suspicion.

'What's this?' he asked suddenly (in English). 'Whisky?'

I informed him that it was rum.

'That's the goods,' he said, and drank it. I then commenced interrogation.

'You are a Bulgar?' I asked.

'No,' said Serge cheerlessly, 'I am Serb.'

'Serb! Then what are you doing here?'

'I hail from Prilep,' he explained. 'When Bulgar come Prilep, they say, "You not Serb; you Bulgar." So they bring it me here with others, and I workit on railroad. My family I not know where they are; no clothes getting, no money neither. English plenty of money,' he added, *à propos* of nothing.

I ignored the hint.

'Then you are a prisoner of war?' I suggested.

'In old time,' he continued, 'Turks have Prilep. I go to America and workit on railroad Chicago—three, four year. When I come back Turks take me for army. Not liking I desert to Serbish army. When war finish, Serbs have Prilep. I go home Serbish civil. Then this war starts. Bulgar come to Prilep and say, "You Bulgar, you come work for us." You understahn me, boss?'

'I must look into this,' I said to the Sergeant-Major. 'Send for the interpreter and ask the Bulgar officer to step in. He's just going past.'

Boris arrived with a salute and a charming smile and listened to my tale. Then he turned a cold eye on Serge and burst into a torrent of Bulgarian, under which Serge stood with lifting scalp.

'Sir,' faltered Serge, when the cascade ceased, 'I am liar. All I said to you is false. I am good Bulgar. I hate Serbs.'

'Then you are not, in fact, a Serb?' I said.

'Nope,' said Serge, nodding his head frantically (the Oriental method of negation).

'Do you want to go home?' I asked cunningly.

'Sure, boss,' replied he. 'Want to go Chicago.'

Boris uttered one blasting guttural and Serge receded to the horizon with great rapidity. 'You understand, *mon ami*,' explained Boris; 'he is really a Bulgar, but the villainous Serb propagandists

Propaganda in the Balkans

have taught him the Serbian language, and that he is Serb. It is his duty really to fight or work for Bulgaria, just as it is ours to liberate him and his other Bulgar brothers in Serbia from the yoke of the Serbs. It is understood, my friend?’

‘Oh, absolutely,’ I replied.

He withdrew, exchanging a glance of hatred with Aristides Papazaphiropoulos, who approached saluting with Hellenic fervour.

‘You wish me, Sare?’ he asked.

‘I did,’ I answered, and outlined to him what had passed. ‘Is it true that propagandism is used to that extent?’

‘It is true,’ he answered sadly. ‘The Serb has much propagandism, the Bulgar also. But in this case both are liars, since the population of Prilep is rightfully Greek.’

Three days later Boris appeared before me with a sullen face

‘I wish to complain,’ he said. ‘You have with you a Greek, one Papazaphiropoulos. It is forbidden by the terms of the Armistice that Greeks should come into Bulgaria. Greeks or Serbs—it is expressly stated. I wish to complain.’

‘You are wrong,’ I replied. ‘He is no Greek. He is a Bulgar. But the cunning Greek propagandists have taught him the Greek language and that he is a Greek. It is really his duty to be the first to rush on to the soil of his beloved Bulgaria——’

‘Ach!’ said Boris, grinding his teeth; ‘you mock our patriotism. You are an Englishman.’

‘I don’t,’ I replied. ‘And I’m not. I’m French. We came over in 1066. You ask my aunt at Tunbridge Wells. But the villainous English propagandists taught me English, and the Scotch gave me a taste for whisky, and——’

But Boris had faded away.

L. I. C.

Much difficulty is being experienced by the Allies in deciding what to do with the German fleet. Funnily enough this is the very dilemma that the Germans were faced with during most of the War. (19.3.19.)

Bakerloonacy

BAKERLOONACY

*This is a song of the Tube—
Let us begin it
By cursing the furies who fight and who bite ev'ry night
To get in it;
The folk who see red and who tread on the dead
And climb over the slain,
And who step on your face in the race for a place
In the train.*

*The pack!
The wolves who attack,
Attempting to kill you until you
Fall flat on your back;
The tigers who tear at your hair and who swear
As they tread on your neck,
Leaving you battered, bespattered and shattered,
An absolute wreck.*

*From these sharks,
These meek-looking typists and clerks,
May Heaven defend you. They'll rend you—up-end you
(I carry the marks.)
This meek-looking, sleek-looking, weak-looking clique
With the Bolshevik brains
Inflamed at the thought that they ought to have caught
Much earlier trains.*

*Mourn
For the hat that is flat
And the collar of which you were shorn.
Shed a tear for the dear little ear that you had
And the bags which to rags have been torn.
Weep for the fellow who tried but who died at your side
As the tide swept along.
He was a victim. They tricked him and kicked him to death,
Though he'd done them no wrong.*

Bakerloonacy

*This is a Song of the Tube,
A ballad of sorrow,
A grey sort of lay of To-day and a greyer To-morrow;
A dismal, abysmal, chaotic, neurotic Creation
Of one who was done after running a mile
To the station.*

D. C.

The police are trying to establish the identity of a man who can give no account of himself and who knows nothing about the War. The fact that he is not wearing red tabs adds to the mystery. (23.5.19.)

AN ERROR IN TACTICS

In the heart of the Forêt de Roumare there is a spot called Rond du Chêne à Leu, where eight paths meet. Why they choose to meet there, unless it is for company, one can't imagine. The fact that there is not an estaminet within five kilometres nullifies its value as a military objective. Therefore, having been decoyed thither by a plausible guide-book, it was with surprise that I beheld an ancient representative of the British Army smoking his pipe with the air of having been in possession for centuries.

'Bit lonely here,' I said.

'Rumble's Moor on a wet Friday's busy to it,' he said emphatically. 'Is it reet the War's over?'

'Yes.'

He puffed his pipe for a few minutes while the information soaked in.

'Who won?'

'The Peace Conference haven't decided yet.'

Conversation languished until I remembered the guide-book.

'According to tradition,' I said, 'it was at this identical spot that Rollo, first Duke of Normandy, hung his golden chain on a sign-post for a whole year without having it stolen.'

An Error in Tactics

'That-at ud be afore we brought our Chinese Labour gang felling timber,' he said firmly; 'I wudden give it five minutes now.'

'I understand, too, that there is a historic ruin hereabouts.'

'Theer was,' he said: 'but he's in hospital.'

'What do you mean?'

'Ratty Beslow, my owd colleague an' sparring pardner. It's 'im you weer talking of, ain't it?'

'I wasn't; but I'm interested in him,' I said, sitting down on a pile of logs. 'How did he get to hospital?'

'Through a mistake in Nacheral 'Istory. You see, me an' Ratty had been in th' War a goodish time an' ha-ad lost our o-riginal ferociousness. So they put us to this Chink labour gang for a rest cure. Likewise Ratty 'ad got too fa-amous as a timber-scrourger-ooop th' line, and it was thought that if 'e was left in th' middle of a forest, wheer it didn't matter a dang if he scrounged wood fra' revally to tatto, it might reform him. But it was deadly dull. We tried a sweepstake f'r th' one as could recognize most Chinks at sight, and a raffle for who could guess how many trees in a circle; but there wasn't much spice to it. So at last Ratty suggested we should try a bit o' poaching.

'"Ah doan't know th' first thing about it," I says; "ah'm town bred. Nobbut Ah could knock a few rabbits over if Ah'd got a Lewis gun handy."

'"Rabbuts be danged!" says he; "Ah've no use f'r such vermin. Theer's stags, so Ah've heerd tell, in this forest."

'"Ah wudden say no to a haunch o' venison," I answered; "but stags is artillery work."

'"They is not," says Ratty. "Nor yet rifles nor bombs."

'"Ah s'pose you stops theer holes an' puts in a ferret," says I, sarcastic; "or else traps 'em wi' cheese."

'"That's the only kind of hunting you've bin used to," replies Ratty. "Stags is caught wi' tactics, a trip-wire an' a lasso."

'"Well, la-ad," I says, "you'd best do th' lassoing. I doan't know the habits o' stags."

'Ratty scrounges a prime rope fra' somewheers, an' we creeps out after nightfall. It was a dree night, the owd bracken underfoot damp

An Error in Tactics

an' sodden, an' th' tall firs looking grim an' gho-ostly in the gloom. Soon theer was a crackling o' twigs, like a tank scouting on tiptoe.

' "Bosch patrol half-left," whispers I.

' "Stow it, you blighter," says Ratty. "This is serious. Can't you see th' stag?"

'I peeps round and, loomin' in the da-arkness, see th' hindquarters of a stag sticking out ayant a tree. It looked bigger 'n Ah've seen 'em in pictures, but Ah've noticed Fritzes look bigger in th' dark.

' "Now's your chance, la-ad," I whispers. "Trip round an' slip th' noose over 'is horns."

' "Not me," growls Ratty. "T'other end's safer."

'He crawls up to it wi' th' rope all ready, but just as he was going to slip it over its leg it seemed to stand on its head, feint wi' its left an' get an upper-cut wi' its right under Ratty's chin. A shadow passed across th' fa-ace o' the moon, which I judged to be Ratty.

' "Ratty's after altitude records," says I to myself, "an' there'll be th'ellanall of a row if that rope is lost."

'However, in a few minutes he started to descend an' made a good landing in some soft bracken. By th' time I'd felt him all over, an' found 'e'd be fit to go to hospital in th' morning, th' stag had disappeared.'

'I never heard of stags kicking like that before,' I interrupted.

'Nor hadn't Ratty,' said the ancient warrior. 'Ah tow'd you he made a mistake in Nacheral 'Istory.

'The next night, feeling mighty lonely, Ah walked five kilometres to th' nearest estaminet, the Rondyvoo de Chasers, an' looked upon the *vang* while it was *rouge*. When I'd done lookin' and started home th' forest looked more gho-ost-like than ever wi' th' young firs bowing an' swayin', and drifts o' cloud peeping through the branches. All at once I heerd a crackling o' twigs like th' night afore, an' then someone stole acrost th' road carrying a rope.

'Ah says to myself, 'it's one of th' Chinks poaching, an' it's 'evin 'elp 'im if 'e's after what Ratty nearly caught last night!"

'Seemingly 'e was, for 'e follered th' noise, an' Ah followed 'im—at a safe distance. Then, dimlike an' looming big, Ah saw th' stag, an' the Chink stealing up behind it.

An Error in Tactics

“‘Tother end, you fool!’ I whispered; an’ he jumps round to its head, slips th’ noose round its neck an’ leads it off as quiet as a lamb.’

‘You don’t expect me to believe,’ I broke in indignantly, ‘that a stag can be led like a poodle on a lead?’

‘P’r’aps not stags,’ said the veteran, relighting his pipe. ‘That’s weer Ratty made the mistake that sent ’im to hospital. But you can do it now and then with a transport mule what’s broke away, an’ the Chink done it.’

C. W. C.

‘What is missing in Ireland?’ asks a daily paper. Speaking generally, the accused. (3.9.19.)

GOLDEN PROMISES

I am the owner of some shares in a mine called ‘Golden Promise’ Mine. I don’t know exactly where it is, but it’s a long way off—in Mexico, I think; anyhow, too far away for me to go and have a look at it.

I bought the shares some years ago. The day before I bought them the paper said they were ‘a feature on reports of a rich vein having been struck.’ They seemed absurdly cheap, and as I had some spare cash which was annoying me at the time I thought I’d better have five hundred or so of these ‘Golden Promises’ quickly, before they went up. I had visions of following the prices and seeing them soaring higher and higher, while I remained cool and collected, holding on to them for a still higher figure. I would not sell for a paltry profit of a few shillings—not I.

I felt sure that I had seized the golden opportunity which we are all supposed to have some time or another. The paper said these shares had ‘great speculative possibilities.’

All this, as I have said, was several years ago. I am still holding on to those shares; but matters did not work out as I had antici-

Golden Promises

pated. The very next day after I had bought them they seemed to hesitate, as if nervous about something. They appeared to have got wind of the news that I had bought some. The paper said they were 'a little weaker on profit-taking'. Evidently the man who sold me mine was content with a small profit, and I felt a sort of pitying contempt for a man who had so little confidence. But perhaps, poor fellow, he wanted the money. Many people are compelled to sell promising securities because they are hard up.

During the next day or two they fell considerably lower, and the paper said they 'had receded on the denial by the directors of the rumour as to a rich vein having been struck'. 'Aha!' said I, 'very crafty of the directors; they want to keep the price down so that they can buy as many as possible for themselves before the big rise'; and I felt quite reassured. For the next few days they wobbled considerably, but mostly down, and I began to find myself quite gratified if they recovered 6d. or so after dropping 1s. 6d. or 2s. Unconsciously I kept lowering the standard of what I hoped from them.

In due course I received a certificate for my shares, and this bucked me up a lot. It was a fine impressive sort of document, with a very nice embossed stamp on it, and it described me as a 'gentleman', which I felt to be perfectly true; but all the same I thought it a tactful thing to say, and some of my confidence returned.

I don't often see the shares quoted now, and when they are they are apparently sold in bundles of eight or so at about 1s. 6d. the lot. I get regular reports as to the progress of the mine, and at first these used to interest me immensely. They contained all sorts of information as to 'cross-cuts' and 'winzes' (whatever they may be), and occasionally they would give details of the sinking of a shaft in some new place to strike into some other burrow they had been making somewhere else, and they seemed to have had a lot of amusement that way. I expect it was rather exciting boring through to the other fellows in the other tunnel. They also used to give minute particulars of the ore 'won'. They call it 'winning'. It seemed to be a kind of game; but they apparently had bad luck, as they lost all they ever won.

Golden Promises

The trouble, we were told, began with the natives of that part, who evidently didn't take to the mine—spoilt their view perhaps. At any rate they developed the habit of (as I gathered from the printed reports I received from time to time) spending their half-holidays and week-ends loafing round about the mine, rolling boulders down it, taking parts of the machinery away as souvenirs, flooding it and suchlike pleasantries. They seem full of fun out there.

There was a shareholders' meeting the other day which I attended. I had been to previous ones. They are always much the same. Everybody goes full of disgust and indignation, and determined to make trouble for the directors; but when they get there all their pluck quickly evaporates and they end up by warmly supporting votes of thanks to the various gentlemen who have been instrumental in robbing them of their money.

On this occasion, however, one shareholder was very peevish about things, and he told us, before the proceedings commenced, that he was going to 'put the directors through it', and we all promised him our moral support and looked upon him as a hero. And after the Chairman had told us the usual story and had assured us that as soon as they had pumped the water out of the mine and installed new machinery, etc., all would be well, the peevish shareholder got up and was very rude to the directors and told them exactly what he thought about them.

But somehow he got no support from us. The Chairman replied to him with a few scathing remarks and appealed to us as really sensible, reasonable businessmen, who would as a matter of course treat such childish behaviour with the contempt it deserved; and we all frowned on the peevish one and would have none of him. And when one of the directors proposed a vote of thanks to the Chairman for his unselfish devotion to our interests we were all vociferous in our support.

But as soon as I had left the meeting I felt that the peevish shareholder had been quite right, and the next time I shall go to the meeting armed with several stones, and I shall induce the other shareholders to do likewise; and when the directors begin to pay

Golden Promises

one another compliments and propose votes of thanks to one another for robbing us of our money we will silently and without warning rise in a body and stone them to death; and we shall feel that, at any rate, we have had something for our money.

If by chance at any time I should have any more money to invest (which at present appears highly improbable) I shall put it into a rubber company—one about to start. Rubber companies give you figures which cannot be denied. For straightforward dealing commend me to rubber companies. They tell you plainly and candidly how many acres they have and how many trees they intend to plant to an acre. They know to a nicety how much rubber they can get from each tree and, working this out with the price of rubber at a 'conservative' figure (they always take a conservative figure), they can tell you exactly how much they will make. And while they are waiting for the rubber trees to grow up they get bananas and coconuts and other side lines off them, which alone will yield enough to pay 20 per cent, or so, quite apart from the rubber. And when they get knobs on (which they do about the second year—the trees, I mean), it is simply money for nothing.

Yes, I shall try rubber next time.

A. G. H.

Mr. 'Pussyfoot' Johnson hopes to carry the Prohibition banner into Ireland. But not if the Irish see him coming first. (24.9.19.)

THE LAST STRAW

It was one of those summer evenings with the chill on, so after dinner we lit the smoking-room fire and wondered what to do. There were eight of us; just the right number for two bridge tables, or four picquet pairs, or eight patience singles.

'Oh, no, not cards,' said Celia quickly. 'They're so dull.'

'Not when you get a grand slam,' said our host, thinking of an accident which had happened to him the night before.

'Even then I don't suppose anybody laughed.'

The Last Straw

Peter and I, who were partners on that occasion, admitted that we hadn't laughed.

'Well, there you are,' said Celia triumphantly. 'Let's play proverbs.'

'I don't think I know it,' said Herbert. (He wouldn't.)

'Oh, it's quite easy. First you think of a proverb.'

'Like "A burnt camel spoils the moss";' I explained.

'You mean "A burnt child dreads the fire,"' corrected Herbert.

Celia caught my eye and went on hurriedly, 'Well, then somebody goes outside, and then he asks questions——'

'From outside?' asked Mrs. Herbert.

'From inside,' I assured her. 'Generally from very near the fire, because he has got so cold waiting in the hall.'

'Oh, yes, I see.'

'And then he asks questions, and we each have to get one of the words of the proverb into our answer, without letting him know what the proverb is. It's rather fun.'

Peter and his wife, who knew the game, agreed. Mrs. Herbert seemed resigned to the world, but Herbert, though faint, was still pursuing.

'But doesn't he *guess* what the proverb is?' he asked.

'Sometimes,' I admitted. 'But sometimes, if we are very, very clever, he doesn't. That, in fact, is the game.'

Our host got up and went to the door.

'I think I see,' he said; 'and I want my pipe anyhow. So I'll go out first.'

'Now then,' said Celia, when the door was safely closed, 'what shall we have?'

Of course you know this game and you know the difficulty of thinking of a proverb which has no moss or stable-doors or glass-houses in it; all of them words which it is impossible to include naturally in an answer to an ordinary question. The proverbs which M s. Herbert suggested were full of moss.

'What about "It's never too late to mend"?' said Mrs. Peter. 'The only difficult word is "mend".'

'We mustn't have less than seven words, one for each of us.'

The Last Straw

'Can't we get something from Solomon for a change?' said Peter. "A roaring lion is a calamity to his father, but the cautious man cometh not again." That sort of thing.'

'We might try it,' said Celia thoughtfully, not feeling quite sure if it were a real proverb; 'but "cometh" would be difficult.'

'I don't see why,' said Herbert. 'One could always work it in somehow.'

'Well, of course, if he asked you, "By what train cometh thou up in the mornings?" you could answer, "I cometh up by the ten-fifteen." Only you don't get that sort of question as a rule.'

'Oh, I see,' said Herbert. 'I didn't quite understand.'

'I expect we shall have to fall back on a camel after all,' said Celia. "'It's the last straw that breaks the camel's back." Who'll do "camel's"? You'd better,' she added kindly to me.

Everybody but myself seemed to think that this was a good idea.

'I'll do "straw",' said Peter generously, whereupon Celia volunteered for 'breaks'. There were seven of us for nine words. We gave Mrs. Herbert the second 'the', fearing to trust her with anything more alarming, and in order to keep it in the family we gave the other 'the' to Herbert, who was also responsible for 'back'. Our hostess had 'last' and Mrs. Peter had 'that'. All this being settled our host was admitted into his smoking-room again.

'You begin with me,' I said, and I was promptly asked, 'How many blue beans make five?' When I had made a suitable answer into which 'it's' came without much difficulty, our host turned to Herbert. Herbert's face had already assumed a look of strained expectancy.

'Well, Herbert, what do you think of Lloyd George?'

'Yes,' said Herbert. 'Yes—er—yes.' He wiped the perspiration from his brow. 'He—er—that is to say I—er—Lloyd George, yes.'

'Is that the answer?' said our host, rather surprised.

Herbert explained hastily that he hadn't really begun yet, and with the aid of an anecdote about a cousin of his who had met Winston Churchill at Dieppe once, he managed to get the 'the' in several times before blowing his nose vigorously and announcing that he had finished.

The Last Straw

'I believe he's playing a different game,' murmured Celia to Mrs. Peter.

The next three words were disposed of easily enough, a lucky question to Peter about the weather giving him an opportunity to refer to his straw hat. It was now Celia's turn for 'breaks'.

'Nervous?' I asked her.

'All of a twitter,' she said.

'Well, Celia,' said our host, 'how long are you going to stay with us?'

'Oh, a long time yet,' said Celia confidently.

'Till Wednesday, anyhow,' I interrupted, thinking it a good opportunity to clinch the matter.

'We generally stay,' explained Celia, 'until our host breaks it to us that he can't stick us any longer.'

'Not that that often happens,' I added.

'Look here, which of you is answering the question?'

'I am,' said Celia firmly.

'Well, have you answered it yet?'

'To tell the truth I've quite forgotten the word that—Oh, I remember now. Yes,' she went on very distinctly and slowly, 'I hope to remain under your roof until next Wednesday morn. Whew!' and she fanned herself with her handkerchief.

Mrs. Herbert repeated her husband's triumph with 'the', and then it was my turn again for these horrible camels. My only hope was that our host would ask me if I had been to the Zoo lately, but I didn't see why he should. He didn't.

'Would it surprise you to hear,' he asked, 'that the President of Czechoslovakia has a very long beard?'

'If it had only been "goats",' I murmured to myself. Aloud I said, 'What?' in the hope of gaining a little more time.

He repeated his question.

'No,' I said slowly, 'not, it wouldn't,' and I telegraphed an appeal to Celia for help. She nodded back at me.

'Have you finished?' asked our host.

'Good Lord, no, I shall be half an hour yet. The fact is you've asked the wrong question. You see, I've got to get in "moss".'

The Last Straw

'I thought it was "camels",' said Celia carelessly.

'No, "moss". Now if you'd only asked me a question about gardening. . . . You see, the proverb we wanted to have first of all was "People who live in glass-houses shouldn't throw stones", only "throw" was so difficult. Almost as difficult was. . . .' I turned to Celia. 'What was it you said just now?'

'Camels,' said Celia.

'"Camels", yes, or "stable doors", or "horses". However, there it is,' and I enlarged a little more on the difficulty of getting in these very difficult words.

'Thank you very much,' said our host faintly when I had finished.

It was the last straw which broke the camel's back, and it was Herbert who stepped forward blithely with the last straw. Our host, as he admitted afterwards, was still quite in the dark, and with his last question he presented Herbert with an absolute gift.

'When do you go back to Devonshire?' he asked.

'We—er—return next month,' answered Herbert. 'I should say,' he added hastily, 'we go *back* next month.'

My own private opinion was that the sooner he returned to Devonshire the better.

A. A. M.

An inventor claims to have made such a clever model of a camouflaged Tank that, although he knows it is in the room, he can't find it. (22.10.19.)

THE BALLYBUN SOVIET

Minutes of the First General Meeting

Unanimously resolved that a branch of the Sinn Fein Soviet be solemnly inaugurated at Ballybun; that all meetings of the Sinn Fein Ballybun Soviet be held at Finnerty's after closing time; that Mr. Lucas Finnerty, Licensed Victualler and J.P., be elected Grand Perpetual President, with power to eject unsuitable members.

Mr. Finnerty, L.V. and J.P., then returned to the room along

The Ballybun Soviet

with Dennis O'Riordan through the broken window, and, after thanking the assembly for the honour done him, said that the expression 'one-legged viper' had no reference to Mr. O'Riordan's qualities as a man and a gentleman. Mr. O'Riordan had forsooth settled his account at the bar, and henceforth he would be proud to walk arm-in-arm with Mr. O'Riordan, steering the same ship of Ireland's Independence to the same goal.

Mr. O'Riordan, speaking with great emotion and a cut lip, said that as the last descendant of the Seven Kings of Kildare he accepted the olive branch in the spirit in which it had been offered. He admitting having used the expression, 'degenerate cattle-thief masquerading as publican,' but that when doing so he was not reflecting upon Mr. Finnerty as a public man, though he still maintained that he was right in objecting to pay for nine glasses of ginger-ale, a liquid with which he was wholly unacquainted.

Unanimously resolved by a large majority that sympathy be expressed with our gallant allies, the Germans, Turks, Bulgarians and Bolsheviks, in their struggle against the hated English tyrant, and that Mr. Trotsky be elected *ex-officio* President of the Ballybun branch.

Mr. Cathal Ua Chavasseagha protested against the use of purely Saxon expressions like '*ex-officio*'. He moved that it be deleted from the minutes. He knew an Irish word which would meet the situation, but it had just slipped him. It was, anyhow, a tastier word, and he moved that it be substituted.—Agreed.

Proposed by Seamus O'Brien (Peter) and seconded by Peter O'Brien (Seamus), that all other distinguished and representative Irishmen be elected honorary Presidents. (Mr. Ua Chavasseagha here explained that 'honorary' was the word which had slipped him.)—Agreed.

Mr. Ulick Dermott McMurteagh proposed that the World's Peace Conference be held in Ballybun, instead of Geneva. Geneva was a hard place to reach by boat, and most people mixed it up with Genoa. No place, he would venture to remark, was so full of amity and conciliation as Ballybun, and their genial host, he opined, would continue to lend them his sumptuous Assembly Hall.

The Ballybun Soviet

Mr. Murphy (Ballybrickeen) interposed. He said he was as full of amity as any other body, but he objected to this constant ramming of Ballybun down their throats. His cousin had a finer assembly hall than had Finnerty, and he forsooth would not sell the liberties of Ballybrickeen for Finnerty's messy porridge.

Mr. Finnerty having suitably replied, they were separated with great difficulty.

Mr. Flaherty McMorrow proposed that President Wilson be instructed to see that justice was done to the Irish farmer. A visitor from Ennis said that, although he was only a visitor, he could not help remarking, *sotto voce* as it were, that farmers were the greatest robbers in creation. If justice were done to the Irish farmer the price of hemp would go up along with him.

There was then an interval of three-quarters of an hour. The police having restored order and friendly relations, the visitor from Ennis was removed to the infirmary.

The Chairman closed the proceedings by thanking the meeting for the general good feeling that had prevailed. He said that the eyes of the world would be fixed on the Sinn Fein Soviet of Ballybun. He proposed that a subscription should be taken for the broken tumblers, and that they should agree to let bygones be bygones and bury the pipe of peace harmoniously.—Agreed.

The proceedings then terminated.

M. D

A man arrested in Dublin was found to possess a loaded revolver, three sticks of gelignite, four fuses, a number of detonators and a jemmy. He is suspected of dabbling in politics. (21.1.20.)

'SMALL ADS'

'Where do you get servants from?' I asked.

'From small ads.,' said Phyllis promptly.

I picked up the paper from the floor where I had thrown it in the

'Small Ads'

morning. My wife is one of those rare women who always leave things where you put them. It is this trait that endears her to me. I ran my trained eye over an ad. column.

'Got it at once,' I said with pardonable pride. 'How's this?—"General (genuine), stand any test trd. £70 possess. s. hands yrs. . s.a.v."'

'I like genuine people,' said Phyllis thoughtfully. 'And under the circumstances'—(here she looked hard at me, as if I were a circumstance)—'under the circumstances I think we ought to have one that will stand any test. Seventy pounds is out of the question, of course, but she might come for less when she sees how small we are. What does "s. hands yrs," stand for?'

'I don't know,' I said; 'I can only think of "soft hands for years."'

'I should like her,' said Phyllis. 'Their hands are the one thing against Generals. She must be a nice girl to take such care of them. Think how careful she'd be with the china. What's "trd."?'

'I'm afraid it must mean tired,' I said.

'Oh, she'd soon get rested here,' said Phyllis. 'I don't think that need be against her. She's probably been in a hard place lately. Are there any more?'

'Plenty,' I said. 'How does this one strike you?—"General. no bacon.possess.2 rms. £45 wky.s.a.v."'

'I like that one,' said Phyllis. 'She must be an awfully unselfish girl to go without bacon. I don't see how we are going to spare two rooms, though, unless she's willing to count the kitchen as one. Forty-five pounds a week must be a printer's error. But we can easily afford forty-five pounds a year.'

'It may mean that she's "weakly,"' I suggested.

'That wouldn't matter much,' said Phyllis; 'and I like her the better for being honest about it.'

'"Why" *might* stand for "whisky,"' I hinted darkly.

Phyllis blanched. 'Then she's no good,' she said; 'I simply couldn't stand one that drinks. What's the next one like?'

I read on: 'Domestic oil no risk. 6 dys.trd.s.hands 10 yrs. s.a.v.'

'I wonder whether that means that she *can* cook on an oil-stove or that she *can't* cook on any other kind? And does the "no risk"

'Small Ads'

refer to her or the stove? It's not very clear, I don't think we'll take up this one's references. Besides I shouldn't like one that was tired for six days.'

'Out of every seven,' I added, 'and the seventh day would be the Sabbath, and her day off.'

'Go on to the next,' said Phyllis firmly.

The next one merely said: 'General. Kilburn tkg. £40 1 rm.s.a.v.' It would be nice to have a taking sort of girl,' I thought (unfortunately aloud).

'We won't think of her, the hussy!' said Phyllis. 'Pass me the paper, please.'

'They all seem to want "s.a.v.,"' she said. 'What do you suppose it means? I wish they wouldn't use so many abbreviations. "S.a." stands for Sunday afternoon, of course, but I can't think what the "v" is for. Of course we'll give them Sunday afternoons free, if that's what it means. I only wonder they don't want an evening off in the week as well. I call them most reasonable. And there are so many to choose from. I always understood from mother that they're so hard to get.'

Then she turned the paper over.

'Oh, you are stupid!' she said. 'You've been looking at the "Shops and Businesses for Sale" column.'

'So've you,' I snapped.

And then I regret to say we had our first quarrel.

I told Phyllis firmly that she is not at all tkg. nor would she stand any test; that no one could engage her, much less marry her, without taking risks; that she hadn't had s. hands for yrs., that *she* wouldn't go without her bacon for anyone, and that I should be jolly thankful if she would take every blessed s.a.v.

I admit that Phyllis was more dignified. She merely sailed out of the room, remarking that I made her trd.

G. G. S.

Germany has decided to abolish gradually all titles of nobility. They will disappear Von by Von. (5.5.20.)

Suzanne's Banking Account

SUZANNE'S BANKING ACCOUNT

'These want paying,' said Suzanne as she bounded into my nominally sacred den at a strictly prohibited hour. Therewith she thrust a *dossier* of tradesmen's bills into my feebly resisting hands, and bang went an idea I had been tenderly nursing since breakfast.

'But I can't spend the rest of the morning writing cheques,' I protested. 'I'm engaged just now on a most important article.'

'With your eyes shut,' commented Suzanne, stooping to a grossly unfair insinuation. 'I must tell Cook to make the breakfast coffee stronger in future; then you might manage to——'

'Look here, Suzanne, you've been married to me long enough to know my methods of work. I can't begin an article until I've got the whole thing shaped in my mind, and to do that I must shut out everything else.'

'Especially your wife, I suppose. Well, I won't stay. You've got all the bills there; but don't start writing the cheques till you've got them well shaped in your mind.'

'But what on earth does all this mass of accounting literature represent?' I asked.

'For the benefit of new readers a synopsis is attached,' said Suzanne. 'They're mostly small items; for instance, Madame Pillby—she's the little dressmaker round the corner, you know; though why an all-British spinster should call herself "Madame" I can't imagine—five-and-fourpence-ha'penny.'

'Suzanne, I will *not* write a cheque for five-and-fourpence-ha'penny! Are they all like that?'

'The biggest is two guineas; that's what it cost to have my last dance-hat altered to your specifications, because you said it tickled your nose. There are seventeen of them in all—bills, not hats; total, twelve pounds, fifteen shillings and elevenpence three farthings, pa-pa.'

'I'll tell you what I'm going to do,' I said. 'I'm going to advertise in the Personal Columns of the papers that I will not be responsible for payment of any debts incurred by my wife under the sum of one pound. That'll stop this half-crown nuisance. Why don't you go out and buy yourself a packet of assorted postal orders?'

Suzanne's Banking Account

'I did once; but I got in with a nice long list just before closing time, and there was very nearly a riot on both sides of the counter.'

'Well, anyhow, this sort of thing has got to stop; I can't waste all the morning settling your miserable little bills. What we'll do is this; you shall have your own banking account, and in future you can write your own cheques—as long as the Bank will stick it.'

'Oh, how perfectly splendid!' cried Suzanne. 'I've always wanted to have a cheque book of my own, but Father thought it un-sexing. Do let's go and take out the licence at once.'

The precious hour of fertilization was already wasted, so there and then I escorted Suzanne to the Bank. At my demand we were ushered into the Manager's room, where we were received with a courtesy only too obviously tempered by the suspicion that I had come to suggest an overdraft. On my explaining our errand, however, the Manager's features relaxed their tenseness, and as I wrote the cheque that brought Suzanne's account into a sordid world he even attempted a vein of fatherly benediction.

'Now we shall require a specimen of the lady's signature,' he said as he produced an amazingly obese ledger and indicated where Suzanne was to sign her name. 'Remove the glove, please,' he added hastily.

'Just like old times in the vestry,' said Suzanne to me in a whisper. Then she wrote her name—'Suzanne Désirée Beverley Trumpington-Jones'—all of it. By the time she had finished she had trespassed into several columns reserved for entirely different uses. The Manager surveyed the effect with consternation.

'Rather a long name, isn't it?' he asked diffidently. 'I was only wondering if our cheque forms would accommodate it all.'

'Well, I'm not really responsible for it all,' she replied. 'The Trumpington-Jones part is the more or less permanent result of a serious accident when I was little more than a child. But I might shorten it a bit. I sometimes answer to the name of Soozles, but I suppose that would only do for really intimate cheques. How would "S. Beverley T.-Jones" do? I shouldn't like to lose the "Beverley"' as it's a kind of family heirloom, and I always use it, even when I'm writing to the sweep.'

Suzanne's Banking Account

I edged away to the window and left them to settle the signature question among themselves.

'And what kind of cheques would you like—"Order" or "Bearer"?' I next heard the Manager asking.

'Show me some patterns, please,' commanded Suzanne.

On the wall was a frame containing a number of different cheque varieties, to which her attention was directed.

'Haven't you any other colours?' she asked. 'I thought a black-and-yellow cheque would be rather becoming; but don't bother about it if it's not in stock.'

She ended by taking one book of blue and one of purple cheques, and with these and a paying-in book (which she said would do so nicely for spills) we at last departed. From behind the closed door of the private office I distinctly heard a prolonged sigh of relief.

A few days later I came upon Suzanne sitting at her writing-table and examining a cheque with a mystified air.

'Anything wrong?' I asked.

'I don't q-uite know,' she replied. 'I sent Angela this cheque the other day to pay for my ticket for the Law Courts' Revel, and she says the Bank people have returned it to her. And it's marked "R.D." in red ink. Who is "R.D."?'

'He's the gentleman who censors cheques; and he has a way of disqualifying them when there's not enough cash to pay them. Suzanne, what have you done with all that money I paid into your account last Monday?'

'But I've only paid those footling little bills. There must be tons of money left, unless the Bank's been speculating with it.'

'Let me have a look at that cheque,' I said.

She handed it to me and I examined it carefully.

'I see it's signed "Thine, Suzanne".'

'But that's how I always sign myself to Angela,' she said; 'and the Manager distinctly told me to use my customary signature.'

'Signature—not signatures,' I explained gently. 'They're rooted in convention at the Bank and can't bear the least approach to variety. And what's this scribbled on the back of it?'

'Oh, that's only a note I dashed off to Angela telling her what I

Suzanne's Banking Account

was going to wear. It seemed such a pity to waste a sheet of note-paper when there was all that space to spare.'

I gave her a quarter of an hour's lesson in the art of drawing cheques. Then I took up the paying-in book which was lying on the table. I knew it ought to be in a virgin state as I had added nothing to the entrance-money. 'And what might all these figures portend?' I asked.

'Those? Oh, that's baby's weight-chart. I'm always going to keep it there.'

Well, well, if Suzanne looks after the weighing-in I can at least control the paying-in. And I left it at that.

S. J. F.

One North of England workman is said to be in a bit of a hole. He has mislaid his strike-fixtured card. (19.5.20.)

THE ACTRESS

You are doubtless aware that in the successful musical comedy, *The Girl of Forty-Seven*, there is a scene in which Miss Verbena Vaine, as *Clementina*, the horse-dealer's beautiful daughter, denounces the disreputable old veterinary surgeon, *Binnett*, so whimsically played by that ripe comedian, Mr. Sid Apps.

On my first visit to the play many weeks ago an incident occurred which both enhanced Mr. Apps's reputation for spontaneous humour and highly diverted the audience.

It will be remembered that at the climax of her outburst, *Clementina*, with eyes ablaze and voice vibrating with passion, hisses, 'Loathsome scoundrel, how I detest and despise you!' On the evening to which I refer a mock submissive look came into Apps's face when these words were spoken, and he interrupted gently, 'Not too much soda, Verbena,' glancing with mischievous curiosity to see how she would take his humorous comment upon her emphatic utterance of this line of many sibilants.

The Actress

The audience was greatly delighted by this effect. Miss Vaine failed completely to maintain the rôle of the indignant beauty and turned her back to the footlights to hide her face, though her laughter was betrayed by the shaking of her handsome shoulders. There was a pause of some moments before she resumed, 'My father shall know of this', and so forth.

Last week, when Doris, my niece, chose that I should take her to see *The Girl of Forty-Seven*, I was not unwilling again to enjoy Apps's humour. I listened with especial care as we approached the scene in the play to which I have referred. Perhaps he would employ some still more successful gag. At last came *Clementina's* outburst. 'Loathsome scoundrel, how I detest and despise you!' she exclaimed with vehemence. 'Not too much soda, Verbena,' replied the comedian gently, with a mischievous glance of curiosity. The actress gave a look of amazement, then quickly turned her back to the audience, where she stood for some moments with her face in her hands and her shoulders shaking, the audience laughing aloud with delight. The action of the play was delayed for some moments before Miss Verbena Vaine resumed her part.

E. J.

PRESENCE OF MIND

*Proud is not the word for me
When I hear my 8 h.p.
Latest model motor-bike,
Having dodged the latest strike,
Is awaiting me complete
At the garage down the street.*

*Joyfully I take my way
(And a cheque book too to pay
The two hundred odd they thought it
Right to charge the man who bought it.)
Still, it is a lovely creature,
Up-to-date in every feature,*

Presence of Mind

*And a side-car, painted carmine—
Joy! to think they really are mine!*

*Time is short; I don't lose much in
Starting, and I let the clutch in;
Lest I should accelerate
Passing through the garage-gate,
Feeling certain as to what'll
Happen, I shut off the throttle,
When—my heart begins to beat—
I'm propelled across the street
In a way I never reckoned,
Gathering speed at every second.*

*Frantic, I apply the brake,
Realising my mistake
With my last remaining wit;
I've not shut, but opened it!
In another instant I
Hit the curb and start to fly .
Aeronautic friends of mine
Say that flying is divine;
Now I've tried it I confess
Few things interest me less,
Still, I own that in a sense
It is an experience.*

*These and other thoughts are there
As I whistle through the air,
And continue till I stop
In an ironmonger's shop
(Kept by Mr. Horne, a kind
Soul, but deaf and very blind)
Still—I mention this with pride,
For it shows how well I ride—
I have left the bike outside.*

Presence of Mind

*Little Mrs. Horne is sitting
In the neat back parlour, knitting,
Mr. Horne, who hears the din
Which I make in coming in,
Leaves the shop and says to her
'Martha, here's a customer,
From the sound of clinking metal
I should judge he wants a kettle.'*

*Mrs. H. shows some surprise
At the sight which greets her eyes,
And, in answer to her shout,
Mr. H. comes running out.*

*Now, it's something of a strain
On the busy human brain
Passing through a window-pane
To decide what it will do
When at last it's safely through.
As I gaze around I find—
Horror! why, I must be blind!
Blind or dead, I don't know which—
All about is black as pitch;
Thick the atmosphere as well
With a dank metallic smell. . . .*

*Guessing that I am not dead
I attempt to loose my head
From a kettle's cold embrace;
And, meanwhile, to save my face
(Finding I can't get it out)
Say politely—up the spout—
'Lovely morning, is it not, Horne?
Think I'll take this little lot, Horne
It is such a perfect fit,
And I'm so attached to it*

Presence of Mind

*That I find I cannot bring
My own head to leave the thing.
So you will oblige me greatly
If you'll pack them separately.'*

M. A. L.

TWENTY YEARS ON

We were sitting in the veranda, Ernest and I. On the greensward before us Ernest Junior and James Junior (I am James) disported themselves as became their years, which were respectively $1\frac{3}{4}$ and $1\frac{5}{8}$. In the middle distance, or as middle as the size of our lawn permits, might be seen the mothers of Ernest Junior and James Junior deep in conversation, discussing, perhaps, the military prowess of their lords, though I rather fear I caught the word 'jumper' every now and then.

A loud difference of opinion between James II and Ernest II, as to the possession of a wooden horse, momentarily disturbed the peaceful scene. It was left to Ernest and myself to settle it, our incomparable wives being still completely engrossed with the subject of our military prowess (or of jumpers). When quiet reigned once more, Ernest said, 'Have you ever looked twenty years on?'

'Practically never,' I answered. 'It is too exhausting.'

'It is exhausting, but with my usual energy I do it all the same,' said Ernest, who is as a fact the world's champion lotus-eater. 'Last night I was picturing a little scene in the year 1940. Shall I tell you of it?' And without waiting for my assent he proceeded:

'The scene is laid in an undergraduate's rooms. Ernest Junior and James Junior are discovered in *négligé* attitudes and the conversation proceeds something like this:

'*Ernest Junior*. What are you going to do with yourself in the Vac?'

'*James Junior*. I shall go abroad, in spite of my choice of objectives being so terribly restricted.'

'*Ernest Junior*. Why restricted?'

'*James Junior*. Well, I wouldn't say this to anybody else, but to

Twenty years on

tell you the truth it is impossible for me to go to either France, Belgium or Italy. You see my dear old Father was in these countries during the first Great War, and if I were so much as to mention them he'd never stop talking. If I were to say that I proposed spending a fortnight in the Ardennes it would let loose such a flood of reminiscence that I should hardly get away before next term begins.

'He gets a little confused at times, too. He told me the other day a long story about the relief of Ypres, and he also boasted of having himself captured a large number of Turks on the Somme.

'And it isn't only that. My mother was a V.A.D. in France, you know. And when the old man had done talking of Ypres and the Somme she'd begin about Rouen and Etaples.'

I laughed, but without mirth, for I did not really think this at all funny. And after all I might have said just the same about Ernest, if only I'd thought of it first.

A. W. B.

We understand it has now been decided that the Ex-Kaiser will travel to England for his trial by way of the Channel Tunnel. (14.7.20.)

HOW TO BUILD A HOUSE

The only way to build a house properly is to employ an architect to build it for you. All the best houses are built by architects—any architect will tell you that. But of course you will always be allowed to say *you* built it, so it will come to the same thing.

The walls of an architect's office are covered with drawings of enormous public buildings which the architect has erected in every capital of Europe. There are also a few of the statelier homes of England which he has put up in his spare time.

While you are waiting you compare these with your own scheme of the six-roomed villa you propose to build.

At last you are ushered into the presence and unless a stove-pipe protruding from your waistcoat pocket suggests that you are

How to Build a House

travelling in somebody's radiators you will probably be asked to sit down, and may even be given a cigarette. There is no difficulty in opening your business. The architect can see at a glance what you have come for and says quite simply, 'You want to build a house?'

'I do,' you reply.

'How many reception rooms?'

This rather staggers you. You had not intended to have any reception rooms at all. You never give receptions. All you wanted was a dining-room and a drawing-room, and a study with a round window over the fire-place.

But it is evidently impossible to confide this to the architect. All you can do is to reply as naturally as you can:

'About half a dozen.'

'Eight reception rooms,' says the architect. 'And how many bedrooms?'

'I don't really know; about one each.'

'Twenty bedrooms,' suggests the architect (there are three in your family). 'And did you say a garage to hold two cars?'

By this time you realize that you are engaged in a game something like auction bridge and so far your opponent has done all the over-calling.

'Double two cars!' you cry excitedly.

'Five cars,' rejoins the architect.

'Six cars!'

'Garage to hold six cars,' repeats the architect, confessing defeat. 'You are, of course, aware that a house on this scale will cost you at least twenty thousand pounds?'

'Of course,' you reply, and you honestly think it would be cheap at the price.

After this the only thing to do is to get away as quickly as possible. It would be pure pathos to suggest any of your wife's labour-saving devices, or introduce the subject of that circular bathroom with a circular bath hanging by chains from the ceiling and a spirit stove under it—your pet invention. Recall a pressing engagement, shake the architect firmly by the hand and promise to come and see him next Tuesday about details. In the interval you

How to Build a House

can compose a letter at your leisure, informing him that in view of the high cost of materials, etc., etc., you have decided to postpone the building of your house, but you desire to build *at once* a gardener's cottage (so that the gardener can be getting the grounds into order) containing one dining-room, one drawing-room, one study (with one round window), three bedrooms, one circular bathroom (with one circular bath) and one tool-shed to hold one tool.

Even so you will probably have to make concessions. Your window will be hexagonal and your bath square. But your worries are over. The architect will choose a builder and between them they will build your house during the next six years, which you will spend in lodgings. It is a long time to wait, certainly, but you will find plenty of amusement in occasionally counting the number of bricks that have been laid since last time. And then in 1926, as you smoke your pipe in your study and gaze out of your hexagonal window, you will not covet the Paradise of Adam, the first gardener.

A. C. H.

A magistrate in Kentucky has had to decide whether a man may marry his divorced wife's mother. In order to preserve the sanctity of the marriage tie, this should, in our view, be made compulsory. (8.12.20.)

ELIZABETH OUTWITTED

'An' when I dies they give me fifteen pounds on the nail an' no waitin',' said Elizabeth triumphantly, as she explained the latest insurance scheme.

'On what nail?' I asked distrustfully. I could not understand why Elizabeth felt justified in paying sixpence per week for a benefit fraught with so little ultimate joy to herself. But she is the sort of girl that can never resist the back-door tout. She is constantly being persuaded to buy something for which she pays a small weekly sum. This is entered in a book, and the only conditions are that she must continue paying that sum for the rest of her natural lifetime.

Elizabeth Outwitted

On these lines Elizabeth has 'put in' for many articles in the course of her chequered career. She has had fleeting possession of a steel engraving of Queen Victoria, a watch that never would go—until her payments ceased—a sewing-machine (treadle), a set of vases and a marble timepiece. The timepiece, she explained, was destined for 'the bottom drawer', which she had begun to furnish from the moment a young man first inquired which was her night out.

As all these things were taken from her directly her payments fell off, I thought I had better give her the benefit of my ripe judgment. 'I shouldn't buy anything on the instalment plan, if I were you,' I advised. 'Some people seem to be made for the system, but you are not one of them.'

'But I 'aven't told you wot I'm buyin' now,' she said excitedly, putting a plate on the rack as she spoke. I ought to say she meant to put it on the rack; that it fell two inches short wasn't Elizabeth's fault.

'It was cracked afore,' she murmured mechanically as she gathered up the fragments. 'Yes, I pays a shillin' a week an' I gets a grammerfone.'

'A what?' I gasped.

'A grammerfone—to play, you know.'

'Where will it play?' I asked feebly.

'Ere,' she said, waving a comprehensive hand; 'an' it won't 'arf liven the place up. My friend 'as 'ers goin' all day long.'

I stifled a moan of horror, for I am one of the elect few who loathe gramophones, even at their best and costliest.

'Elizabeth,' I cried, tears of anguish rising to my eyes, 'let me implore you not to get one of those horr—— I mean, not to be imposed on again.'

'I've got it,' she announced. 'I meanersay I've paid the first shillin' an' it's comin' to-morrow. I 'ave it a month on trial.'

The month certainly was a trial—for me. Ours is not one of those old-fashioned residences with thick walls that muffle sound, and where servants can be consigned to dwell in the bowels of the earth. Every noise which arises in the kitchen, from Elizabeth's badinage with the butcher's boy to the raucous grind of the knife-machine, echoes through the house *via* the study where I sit.

Elizabeth Outwitted

Thus, although Elizabeth kept the kitchen door shut, I found myself compelled for one-half of the day to consider an insistent demand as to the ultimate destination of flies in the winter time. The rest of the day the gramophone gave us *K-K-K-Katie*. (Elizabeth had only two records to begin with.)

I became unnerved. My work suffered. It began to trickle back to me, accompanied by the regrets of editors; and to writers the regrets of editors are the most poignant in the world.

The situation was saved by the most up-to-date tout of the whole back-door tribe. He persuaded Elizabeth to go in for Spiritualism. Do not misunderstand me. You can be a Spiritualist and also keep a gramophone, but, if you are Elizabeth, you cannot keep the two running at the same time if you must pay a shilling a week for each. When she sought my opinion I strongly advised the seances, which I said were cheap at the price; indeed I thought they were when the gramophone departed.

It was now Elizabeth's turn to be unnerved. She has a mind that is peculiarly open to impressions, and communion with the spirits unbalanced her. She justified her expenditure of a shilling weekly by placing the utmost faith in them.

'I 'ad a message from them there spirits larst night,' she informed me one day, 'an' they tell me I must change my 'abitation.'

'What do you mean?' I asked, startled.

'I put a message through, arskin' them when I should get a settled young man, an' they told me that the fates are agen me in my present dwelling, so if you'll please take my notice from——'

I will not go through the sickening formula. Every housewife must have heard it several times at least in the past year or so. I accepted Elizabeth's resignation and began to concentrate on newspaper announcements. But I took an utter dislike to the spirits and listened with cold aloofness when Elizabeth began, 'I was talkin' to the spirit of my young man larst night——'

'I didn't know you had the spirit of any young man,' I interrupted.

'Yes, I 'ave. I mean Ned Akroyd, 'oo was drowneded.'

Now I have never believed in the alleged drowning of the said

Elizabeth Outwitted

Ned. The news—conveyed to Elizabeth by his mate—that he had fallen from a ferry-boat near Eel Pie Island seemed unconvincing, especially as it happened shortly after Elizabeth had lent him fifteen and sixpence.

'I 'ad quite a long talk with 'im,' she went on. 'Next time I'm goin' to arst 'im about the fifteen and six 'e borrowed, an' see if I can't get it back some'ow.'

How the spirit world would have considered this proposition is still uncertain, for Elizabeth never returned to the seances. She came to me one day in a state of violent agitation. 'I see Ned Akroyd when I was out larst night,' she began, 'an' would you believe it, 'e's no more dead than I am, the wretch!'

'Well, aren't you glad?' I inquired.

'Glad, an' 'im with another girl an' pretendin' all the time not to see me! Men are 'ounds, that's what they are. An' I'll go to no more seances. They're a swindle.'

'They were wrong about telling you to change your habitation too, weren't they?' I suggested insinuatingly.

'Course they were.' Suddenly her face brightened. 'I'll be able to 'ave the grammerfone back now,' she said.

At the moment I am writing to the sounds of *K-K-K-Katie*, which, I fear, is giving me rather a syncopated style. But if the Editor is k-k-k-kind he will not banish me from *P-P-Punch* for this reason, as anyone can see my intentions are g-g-g-good.

Stay! *K-K-K-Katie* has ceased and I can think lucidly. An inspiration has come to me. Has not Elizabeth in her time wrought havoc among my crockery? The hour is ripe for me to retaliate.

To-morrow at dawn I shall examine the gramophone records and—*they will come in two in my hands.*

It will be the first time I have broken any record.

MRS. F. A. K.

D'Annunzio is reported to be coming to a more reasonable frame of mind. Apparently he is disposed to allow Italy a certain measure of independence. (29.12.20.)

Racing as a Business

RACING AS A BUSINESS

(The kind of article which one may confidently look for in the sporting columns of a penny newspaper at this time of the year.)

From the very beginning of the season I have insisted that our objective should be 'the winter's keep'. Those who have stuck to me all along and played my system are on velvet.

During the flat-racing year I have given a hundred and fourteen selections. Let me just tabulate the results; I like tabulating, for it fills my column in no time.

<i>Selections</i>	<i>Won</i>	<i>Second</i>	<i>Third</i>	<i>Unplaced</i>
114	5	8	1	100

N.B.—Non-starters neglected.

The above is a statement of which I may well be proud. I assert with confidence that few sporting journalists can show anything like this record.

Certain captious correspondents like 'O.T.' and 'Disgusted' have pointed out that my selections during this period show a loss of £104 9s. 11½d. on a flat stake of £1. All I can say is that people who bet increasing stakes are increasing, while people who bet flat stakes are—Well, that disposes of 'Disgusted' and 'O.T.' My readers know that my system is to have the minimum stake on the losers and the maximum stake on the winners. We shall never attain that abstract perfection, but we should keep this ideal before us. I believe in selections; it pays.

Take yesterday's selections, for instance. Here they are, with results tabulated:

1.00	Breathing Time	..	..	<i>Unplaced.</i>
1.30	Taddenham	..	..	<i>Unplaced.</i>
2.00	Aminta I ..	..	..	<i>Unplaced.</i>
2.30	Giddy Gertie	..	..	<i>Non-Starter.</i>
3.00	Transformation	..	..	<i>Unplaced.</i>
3.30	Likely Case	..	..	<i>Won—20 to 1 on.</i>

Racing as a Business

That I consider a highly successful day's racing, provided your stakes were proportionally placed; and here again I must insist on my principle of maximum and minimum stakes.

Let us suppose, as naturally most of my readers did, that a backer went to the course with a bookmaker's credit of twenty thousand pounds and a thousand or so spare cash in his pocket. Being a shrewd man he would place £1 on Breathing Time to win. (I dare say even 'O.T.' and 'Disgusted' did me the honour of following me so far.) On Taddenham, true to my principles, our backer would raise his stake to £1 10s. Aminta I would carry £2, or £2 10s. if he were punting. But I cannot too strongly discourage this habit of making violent increases in stake; it is almost gambling. Much better put on only £2 with a safe bookmaker, such as Mr. Bob Mowbray, of Conduit Street, whose advertisement appears somewhere in our columns.

To proceed, our backer finds to his relief that Giddy Gertie is a non-starter and retires to the refreshment bar for a bracer. The 2.30 race being run off he returns to the Ring for the serious business of the day. After examining Transformation in the paddock and listening to the comments of the knowing ones—'Too thick in the barrel,' 'Too long in the pastern,' 'Too moth-eaten in the coat,' he will exercise caution and, instead of 'putting his shirt' on Transformation and plunging to the extent of, say £5, will put up not more than £3 10s. and await the result with calmness. When Transformation is returned unplaced (or, as 'O.T.' and 'Disgusted' would say, 'also ran') our backer is not abashed. Taking full advantage of his credit he places his twenty thousand on Likely Case, together with the odd thousand or so in his pocket, being careful, however, to ascertain that his return ticket is still safely in his possession.

Our backer is shrewd enough to understand that this is a case for the maximum stake. Strong in his faith in my principle he sees Likely Case win with little surprise.

Returning to Town that evening he records his day's dealings in this manner:

Racing as a Business

				<i>Lost.</i>			<i>Won.</i>		
				£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Breathing Time				1	0	0	—		
Taddenham				1	10	0	—		
Aminta I				2	0	0	—		
Giddy Gertie				—			—		
Transformation				3	10	0	—		
Likely Case				—			1000	0	0
Expenses: Return ticket, entrances, three double b. and s., etc.				2	0	4	—		
				<hr/> £10 0 4			<hr/> 1000 0 0		
							10 0 4		
							<hr/>		
Balance ..							£989 19 8		

I may mention that the official s.p. of 20 to 1 on Likely Case is distinctly cramped. On the course it was possible to obtain more generous terms and lay only 19 to 1 on.

Thus one sportsman by careful observance of my principle has stacked up a goodly array of chips towards his winter's keep. All this goes to show that if a man will bet sanely and avoid 'going for the gloves' he can make a modest competence on the Turf.

This afternoon the Vale Selling Plate of 300 sovs. is down for decision. To fill my space I cannot do better than give a list of

PROBABLE STARTERS AND JOCKEYS

				<i>st. lb.</i>		
MAYANA				9	7	Digby.
AVIGNON				9	3	Harris.
WISE UNCLE				8	7	Holmes (O.)
PERIWIG				7	7	Benny.
BEATUS				7	0	Peters.

In Nurseries, Weight-for-age races and so on I make it a rule to give only one selection, but in a struggle of this importance I expect to receive a little more latitude. Of these, then, I take Mayana and Periwig to beat the field. At the same time I feel strongly that Wise Uncle's form at Kempton was not correct, and that he will nearly win, if he can beat Beatus, who seems to be let in nicely at 7 st. All the above will be triers, but it is doubtful whether any amount of

Racing as a Business

trying will enable them to beat Avignon, whose chances I am content to support. I conclude by wishing my readers a good time over this race.

E. P. W.

With reference to the delay in fixing up the Dempsey-Carpentier fight, there is now talk of Dempsey qualifying this year for the Nobel Peace Prize. (26.1.21.)

THE PASSING OF ANDREW

Hogmanay!

Motor cars and steam lorries tore through the streets, spraying the pedestrians with mud. As fast as they were muddied they were washed down again by huge blobs of rain driven by a fierce wind.

Hogmanay! the last day of the year, and perfect weather for it. (This is a story of Glasgow.)

As seen by the casual observer the staid business men hurrying busily from one coffee-house to another, trying to dodge acquaintances, presented the same appearance as on any other day of the year. But to one possessing insight there was a subtle difference. To the experienced eye was discernible in each an air of resolution, of fixed determination to attend that night the Annual Festival at Glasgow Cross, there to bring his bottle out and the New Year in.

The narrow streets rang with the skelping of rain-sodden kilts on brawny legs, but above this and the howling of the wind could be heard the skirl of the bagpipes. In an office somewhere a city magnate was piping to his staff to encourage them to work harder and thus make up for the next day's holiday. He only piped half-heartedly; New Year's Day falling on a Saturday, it would only be a half-holiday.

Andrew MacMutchkin and his friend paused outside a coffee-house. A silence fell between them. Neither wanted to be the one

The Passing of Andrew

to suggest going in. At that moment one of the pipes which convey the rain-water from the roofs to the drains burst. It had worn thin. A large piece of iron piping and a four-inch stream of water hit Andrew on the back of the neck.

'MacCrianlarich,' said he, 'it's startin' tae rain a wee thing mair, and Ah'm thinkin' there's maybe hailstones amang it. Did ye say a coffee?'

'Ah didna,' replied Auchterlonie MacCrianlarich fiercely. 'Hae Ah no telt ye a'ready, Ah had yin yesterday? But as ye're pressin' . . .'

'Naw, naw, Auchterlonie! Ower muckle coffee's bad for the nerves. But we micht gang in and sit doon fornenst twa empty cups. That wad keep the bit lassie frae speirin'. Forbye,' he added, 'they hae matches on the tables here.'

Away in the Highlands—about two miles out of Glasgow, in fact—a guid-wife sat preparing the Ne'erday dumpling. Having rolled it on the floor until it was a perfect sphere she produced a box of drawing instruments. First, with her thumb-nail she put in the equator and the meridian of Greenwich; then she proceeded to map out all the countries in their correct relative positions, their capitals and principal cities marked, and every tenth meridian and parallel. Scottish education is a wonderful thing.

This accomplished, she returned her dividers, protractor and flexible scale to their plush-lined box and picked up her bowl of pre-War currants. Only four were left.

One she placed in the dumpling where Glasgow was marked. Did not her man toil for her there? One she placed at Auchenfechnie, near the top left-hand side of Scotland. Was there not a bonnie wee distillery there? The third she stuck in about the middle of the coast of Florida. It was there her brother, the Kirk elder, was running contraband whisky. The fourth and last she placed in the middle of France. Somewhere in France her son Jamie—she sighed at the recollection—her Jamie had laid down his whisky and turned his head for a second. When he turned it back again his whisky was gone; and from that day to this he had been reported only at odd intervals, still in pursuit of the other Scot.

The Passing of Andrew

The preparations complete, she lit the gas-ring and gently placed the dumpling on it to bake; then crossing the kitchen threw herself down luxuriously on a chair in which eight generations of MacMutchkins had rested their weary limbs after the day's work was over. Public-houses were further apart in those days.

Her pet haggis ran to her side and prettily sat up and begged for a slab of shortbread. He got what he was asking for.

As she reclined there, polishing the corkscrew, a sweet song rose to her lips:

*The belles o' Spain are unco nate,
The French senoras jolies,
But Glesca lassies hae them bate
At fechtin' wi' the polis.*

The alarum-clock went off.

Half-past six! In a minute or two, her man would return from the city, bringing good cheer.

A latchkey scraped in the front-door lock; the door opened and shut with a crash; a hollow groan and slow heavy footsteps sounded in the lobby. Janet sprang to her feet and met Andrew at the kitchen door.

His glengarry bonnet was on crosswise, the tails hanging over one ear. His sporran swung listlessly from his left hand; his eyes had a vacant stare. He spoke thickly, swayed on his feet and passed his right hand slowly across his damp forehead.

Janet was puzzled. He looked quite normal. Hundreds of Glasgow guid-wives would have thought the same. Yet something must be wrong.

'What ails ye, man?' she asked in her soft Glasgow accent.

'"... from him that hath not shall be taken away even the little that he hath",' moaned Andrew.

'Awandra, ye've been playin' ha'penny nap.'

'Wumman, dinna jest. That haverin' body MacCrianlarich keppit me at the dinner-hoor, and on ma way hame the nicht Ah gaed intil MacDonald's—and it's a dirty thievin' clan he belongs tae—and

The Passing of Andrew

he tells me *ye canna buy a bottle efter half-past twa o'clock on Fridays!*

BANG!

The neglected dumpling burst into smithereens.

A portion representing the United States of America flew across the kitchen and, catching Andrew MacMutchkin fairly between his eyes, killed him instantly.

A merciful death.

For what is Hogmanay to a Scotsman without whisky?

R. S. McL.

It seems that the Dutch Government had no official knowledge of the visit to Holland of Sir Eric Geddes. They just felt the ground shaking. (9.2.21.)

A RURAL DIALOGUE

I have the reputation of being a nice-spoken gentleman. Indeed, to be frank, I *am* a nice-spoken gentleman.

'A fine day!' I cried with boisterous *bonhomie*. It wasn't really; it was just an 'Oh, to be in England' sort of day. But *I* felt fine. It was approaching lunch time.

'Eh?' The ancient rustic stopped and, dragging forward an ear, made a rude mudguard for it with a curved gnarled hand.

Of course I knew at once I had made a mistake. The fellow wasn't typical. He was a post-War rustic. Had he been the real thing he would have tottered with humility and pulled his forelock and quavered:

'That it be sure-ly, Sur, and thankee kindly for a-mentioning of it.'

But this chap was deaf. Not picturesquely and apologetically hard of hearing, but crudely deaf. I mean, he couldn't hear, and did not scruple to show it.

'A fine day,' I repeated more boisterously but with some slight diminution in *bonhomie*.

'Eh?' A dreadful dogged expression had come into his old eyes.

A Rural Dialogue

'I said,' I shouted, 'it's a fine day.'

'Speak up, can't you?' he snarled.

A dirty-faced little girl, pushing a wheeled packing-case, in which a dirtier-face littler girl was precariously seated, paused near us.

'There,' said Dirty-face to Dirtier-face—'there, Mewriel, 'ark at the funny gentleman and Old Ben giving theirselves back-answers.'

'It's a fine day,' I bawled.

Dirtier-face in the miniature cart crooned rapturously and Dirty-face nodded encouragement.

'What'd I tell you?' she prompted. 'Didn't I *say* you'd 'ave a treat if you was good and gave over eating the 'ood?'

A butcher boy dismounted from his blood-stained bicycle and joined our group. The ancient rustic, with every outward sign of boredom, presented to me the other ear.

'Now then,' he said bitterly, 'try again, Mister.'

I admit I was getting annoyed.

'It's a fine day,' I bellowed.

Two women with aprons, one youth with a mouth-organ and a dog with a cross (a pug's tail at the end of a fox-terrier's body) were now of our party. The ancient rustic remained unmoved.

'Well,' he asked impatiently, 'ow long are you goin' to keep me 'angin' about 'ere?'

I shrugged my shoulders and would have left the ungracious fellow there and then but he caught me by the coat-lappet and held on.

'No, no,' he protested, 'we got to thresh this thing out.'

With an effort I achieved patience.

'I simply remarked that it was a fine day,' I stated in a deliberate and scientifically projected yell, putting my lips close to his ear.

The Ancient scowled up at me.

'I don't want to 'ear no scandals,' he threatened. 'If it ain't fit for the 'ole parish to 'ear I don't want to 'ear it.'

My position was now an intensely embarrassing one. By this time our audience numbered quite a dozen; it included a postman, a male child with a basket on his head, and a hedger-and-ditcher who had temporarily abandoned hedging-and-ditching for the more fas-

A Rural Dialogue

cinating occupation of looking-and listening. Everybody seemed to be in the highest spirits. Dirtier-face in the packing-case was rocking herself to and fro in an ecstasy of appreciation, her nose repellently unkempt; upon Dirty-face's countenance there dwelt the showman's smirk. The little group closed in upon us. The dog with a cross barked with all a dog's instinct for a climax.

I lost my nerve. It seemed to me that I was destined to stay here for ever, bawling weather-platitudes at a stone-deaf bumpkin.

'A fine day! A fine day! A fine day!' I shrieked, dodging dizzily from ear to ear of the Ancient.

'Eh?'

I threw up my arms in a gesture of surrender. The Ancient immediately doubled his old fists. He thought—not without reason—that I was about to kill him. But at this juncture (as has often happened in our rough island story) the crisis produced the man. The butcher boy tapped the Ancient on the elbow.

'The gent says as 'ow it's a fine day,' he said in a calm distinct treble.

The Ancient lifted sceptical brows to the heavens. Simultaneously a beastly little cloud—though I'm prepared to swear there hadn't been even a man's hand of one to be seen on the horizon when I first made my nice-spoken comment—burst in a spatter of rain.

The Ancient turned up the collar of his coat.

"E's a liar," he said contemptuously.

R. C.

The appointment of Mr. Austen Chamberlain as Leader of the House has been officially confirmed by the Northcliffe Press. (30.3.21.)

DEFINITIONS FROM A SCOTS DICTIONARY

Sporran. The indicator hung in front of the kilt to let the wearer know whether he is going or coming.

Cairngorm. The name given to the stone-pile or cairn erected by the Scot over the grave of his mother-in-law. The longer she has lived with him the larger does he feel it his duty to build the

Definitions from a Scots Dictionary

cairn gorm. For greater security many a Scot has been known to spend the remainder of his life on the stone-pile.

Highland Brogues. The different forms of dialect spoken in Scotland.

Haggis. A wild animal of the hog variety, which frequents lonely Highland glens and sequestered Burns Anniversary Celebrations. Very ferocious. Its bite causes hydrophobia.

Burns Anniversary Celebrations. A good excuse.

Tearing the Tartan. A weird ceremony, generally performed in churches outside of Scotland by ministers who can 'talk the two talks' in two different languages. It is a mark of great respect to the Highlander, and its performance is the final test of a minister's ability to preach.

Porridge. An inexpensive concoction taken before meals for the purpose of preventing over-eating. Peculiar to the Scot.

Claymore. The Gaelic word for Balmoral Bonnet. When the word is spelt with a capital C it conveys that the Balmoral Bonnet has a red 'toorie' on top. When it is not, it signifies that it has not.

Toorie. This is a central point on a Balmoral Bonnet, round which the bonnet rotates. When there is no 'toorie' on the bonnet the Highlander does the rotating and the bonnet remains stationary. It is a breach of Highland etiquette to wear a 'toorie' at a Highland gathering, a marriage or a funeral.

Highland Gathering. The red swelling on the point of a Scotsman's nose brought on by playing the bagpipes.

Bagpipes. A sucking bottle or bag, manufactured from haggis skins and used for holding whisky.

Drones. The tubes through which the whisky is sucked. So called from the sound made by the Highlander in the performance of this duty.

R. W.

'With the aid of the All-Highest,' says King Tino in a message to his troops, 'victory will come to the efforts of our race.' Now where have we heard that one before? (22.6.21.)

Out!

OUT!

'Hullo,' I said, breezily paternal; 'what's the matter with Peggy?

My daughter, who has achieved seven years, was contorting her charming face (she is supposed to be the image of me, though of course my face is larger) into agonised grimaces, while she nursed one reddened cheek in her hand.

'The poor child's got toothache,' explained my wife.

'Oo,' corroborated Peggy, rocking herself expressively.

I came to a quick decision. I am rather noted for coming to quick decisions in other people's affairs; that is why I am avoided by weak procrastinating folk.

'She must have the tooth out,' I said firmly, and added, 'at once,' even more firmly. I am that sort of man.

'Oh,' groaned Peggy.

My wife looked at me as a true wife should look; I mean, admiringly.

'You are right,' she agreed. 'Will you take Peggy to the dentist's after breakfast? I cannot bear to see the dear child suffer so.'

'Oo,' obligato'd Peggy.

'Certainly,' I said in my super-man manner. 'Be ready at ten, Peggy.'

'Oo,' hooted Peggy.

'Come, come,' I exhorted her, 'there is nothing to make such a fuss about. Nothing. The tooth will be out before you know anything about it. Remember you are your father's daughter.'

'And your mother's,' suggested my wife mildly.

'Oo,' commented Peggy.

In my own inimitable way I kept the child entertained on our gruesome walk. Several people glanced at us sentimentally as we walked along hand in hand—the big strong man and the tiny winsome girl-child; we must have presented an attractive picture. Of course my object was to keep the mind of my little daughter distracted from the contemplation of the coming ordeal. For a visit to the dentist is a horrible, a ghastly, a damnable thing to dwell upon—for a child, of course. I'd sooner be flayed alive than sit in a dentist's chair—if I were a child.

Out!

'Good morning,' said the dentist genially.

'Oh, good morning, as it were,' I retorted somewhat nervously.

'My little daughter——'

'Come in,' said the dentist, smiling.

'Oo,' said Peggy.

In another moment we were in the torture-chamber. My hands were wet, my throat dry. The place struck me as being intolerably sinister. So did the dentist's smile; his teeth were so incredibly perfect.

'Now, dear,' I whispered huskily to Peggy.

Instantly she forgot whose daughter she was. She shrank into a corner, screaming. In fact she behaved disgracefully. Finally, she declared that she wouldn't sit in that awful chair for anything. 'Ooooooooo!'

'Peggy, I'm ashamed of you,' I said. 'Look; Daddy will sit in the chair. Watch Daddy. You'll see it doesn't hurt a teeny-weeny bit.'

I winked at the dentist. The dentist winked at me. I sat in the chair, tossed back my head with a light laugh and opened my mouth. The next moment the fellow had squirted some cold stuff into my gum.

'Oo!' cried Peggy. But it was now an 'Oo!' of interest rather than of alarm.

'Ah—— ah—— ah—— ah——' I tried to explain. But the dentist stopped me.

'One moment,' he said brusquely. And then my tooth was out—the tooth which had tormented me off and on for the last month, though I had kept my torture a profound secret. I staggered from the chair bewildered, affronted, and relieved.

'Now me,' said Peggy eagerly.

But the dentist said that she must on no account have any of her teeth out, and prophesied confidently that her pain would quickly vanish. And Peggy told him that, curiously enough, it had already vanished.

On our way back home Peggy and I laughed very heartily at the joke of my having had a tooth out instead of her. And then all at once her dear little face grew solemn.

Out!

'But you were brave, Daddy,' she said.

'Ha, ha,' I laughed as in deprecation of her praise. But I knew she was right.

The door of my study was open; so was that of the sitting-room. It was the hour of Peggy's bedtime.

'But, Mums,' said Peggy's clear voice, 'how did the dentist know that Daddy's tooth——?'

'Hush, darling. I'd prepared him. Daddies don't always know what's best for them.'

'I see,' said Peggy gravely. 'And may I have the half-crown now?'

A brief silence while, I suppose, the blood-money passed. Then, 'of course, darling,' urged my wife, 'it's very wrong to deceive anyone, even daddies, but——'

Here followed the age-old laughter of women.

But it was I who laughed next morning. I can't remember having had so good a night for ages.

R. C.

An ornithologist remarked the other day that the only really wingless birds are found in Australia. But what about the Soho chicken? (13.7.21.)

THE OTTOMAN

SCENE:—*Last of three plays at afternoon performance of Grand Guignol. Old Lady, deaf, unaccustomed to this kind of thing and slow in the uptake, is seated in front row of stalls with friend. Latter has seen whole show several times. Curtain rises, discovering hero seated on ottoman.*

FRIEND. Now, that's the hero.

OLD LADY. What?

FRIEND. I say that's the hero.

OLD LADY. Ah! Yes, of course, the hero.

The Ottoman

FRIEND. You see he doesn't know his wife is hiding in the ottoman.

OLD LADY. Whatoman?

FRIEND. The ottoman.

OLD LADY. Well, why doesn't he look?

FRIEND. Oh, because he doesn't know she's there.

OLD LADY. No, but if he looked he would, wouldn't he?

FRIEND. I suppose so. But his thoughts are not on the ottoman.

OLD LADY. No, but *he* is.

FRIEND. Yes; but, you see, he's waiting for the woman he loves.

OLD LADY. But I thought you said she was in the ottoman?

FRIEND. No, no; that's his *wife*.

OLD LADY. Who is?

FRIEND. The woman in the ottoman. The whole point of the thing is that he doesn't love his wife. He loves the Countess.

OLD LADY. The Countess? What Countess?

FRIEND. The Spanish Countess.

OLD LADY. Is she in the ottoman too?

FRIEND. Certainly not. Here she comes through the window.

OLD LADY. What was that noise?

FRIEND. It was the Countess saying, '*Caramba*'.

OLD LADY. I don't know what that means.

FRIEND. Nor does he.

OLD LADY. Does the woman in the ottoman know?

FRIEND. I don't know. But Don Bastinado Cigarillo knows.

OLD LADY. Who's he?

FRIEND. The Count. He's concealed in the Venetian blind.

OLD LADY. What was that she said then?

FRIEND. She said, '*Manana*'.

OLD LADY. What?

FRIEND. MANANA.

OLD LADY. What does that mean?

FRIEND. I don't know. They just say it.

OLD LADY. I do wish those people behind would keep quiet. I didn't catch that.

The Ottoman

- FRIEND. He only said 'what?'
- OLD LADY. Why did he say 'what?'
- FRIEND. Well, you see, he doesn't understand Spanish.
- OLD LADY. Then what does she speak it for?
- FRIEND. She doesn't know he can't understand it.
- OLD LADY. Then why doesn't he say so?
- FRIEND. Why, don't you see, he doesn't know the Spanish for it.
- OLD LADY. But couldn't he ask her?
- FRIEND. No, he couldn't. Anyway, he doesn't.
- OLD LADY. Who's that?
- FRIEND. Bastinado, the villain, the Count, the Countess's husband. There, he's stabbed his wife in the heart.
- OLD LADY. Whatever for?
- FRIEND. Because he's not very fond of her.
- OLD LADY. I don't quite follow what's happening.
- FRIEND. It's the hero's turn now. He's stabbed Don Bastinado in the heart. Now, don't you see, he'll drag both bodies over to the ottoman.
- OLD LADY. Won't his wife be surprised when she comes out of the ottoman?
- FRIEND. Good heavens, no! She won't be surprised. She's asphyxiated by now. There you are. He's opened it. Doesn't he look annoyed? Well, presently he'll put the other bodies into the ottoman, climb in, stab himself in the heart and pull down the lid. Come on, dear. I don't think we need stay till the end. Here's your umbrella.

(EXEUNT)

A. d'E.

Now that the subject of the deterioration of modern manners has been so well ventilated in the Press, we hope grown-up people will avoid the gaucherie of speaking to an undergraduate while he has his pipe in his mouth. (17.8.21.)

Keeping Chickens

KEEPING CHICKENS

When Margery and I first contemplated the venture we spoke of it as 'Keeping chickens'. This we did without thought, just because everybody else put it that way. Of course what we really intended was that the chickens should keep *us*. The idea first trailed splendidly across our vision when eggs were sixpence each. Margery, who is the mathematician of the family, brought the matter down to concrete statistics.

'Let us suppose,' she argued, 'that we start with twenty chickens and that each chicken lays three hundred eggs a year. That means £7 10s. from each one and £150 a year from twenty.'

'Why not make it forty,' I suggested, 'and take £300 a year out of the concern?'

It seemed such an absurdly simple way of making money that I could never understand why we hadn't thought of it before. Then another view of the question occurred to me.

'By the way,' I said, 'do they require any kind of nourishment, or do they just exist on the Rector's glebe and lay the eggs in the home depot?'

'Don't be foolish. Of course they have to be fed on all sorts of things—corn and meat and bran mashes and oyster shells.'

'What do you propose to do?' I asked. 'Resort to larceny or the more customary practices of commerce?'

This, you may say, was the first shadow of the eclipse. Following it were days in which the house became strewn with price lists of delectable chicken-foods. There is really no food which may not be tendered to a chicken. Everything except chicken; and that is not mentioned, only by reason of the fine feelings of the post-war chicken-food manufacturers. On some days, never of course touching the 'first fine careless rapture', we had visions of affluence; on others, of starvation; depending upon the particular diet we happened to be considering at the moment.

At last the time came when we had gathered together the shells, the flints, the wheat (tail), the middlings, the bromo-sulphates, the mint juleps and all the rest of the menu, and nothing was required except chickens.

Keeping Chickens

The first purchase of stock was made by me as a surprise for Margery.

'Whatever are they?' said Margery in a tone which might indicate an introduction to some strange and unexpected animal.

'They are,' I replied, 'descendants in the direct line of the Wyandotte family. They do not belong to any Trade Union, and they only stop laying to partake of food.'

I knew this was all right because I had it on the unimpeachable word of the vendor. Then we bought a batch of Rhode Island Reds, led by the all-red Trotsky, a gentleman of fine feather but disreputable habit. Then the fumes of acquisition overcame us and we bought left and right, by auction and by private treaty, until the inherited hen-houses and several hastily constructed annexes were becoming overcrowded. Then eggs fell to fourpence. Then we discovered that six of the Wyandotte family were members of the wrong sex. Then somebody in Manchester, or somewhere equally detestable, cornered the bromo-sulphates. Then eggs fell to three-pence.

'Margery,' I remarked, 'do you realize that, if anyone happens to bull middlings, or if Trotsky elects to do in any more of the Rector's bantams, or eggs fall another remote decimal, we shall in a short time become the prey of the Official Receiver? How about selling out some of the stud before the rats get them?'

So the following week we sold out the inhabitants of the main annexe, together with Trotsky, who by the way is, or was, living out of his time—the cock-fighting era. All this was accomplished not a moment too soon. Eggs are now 2½d.

We still dole out a certain amount of wheat (tail) and all the rest of it to the remnant, and yesterday we interviewed one of the direct male descendants of the Wyandotte family, well basted and properly accompanied with a suitable vegetable. But out of all our travail we have come upon one great truth. We know exactly what people mean when they say, 'We are *keeping* chickens'.

A. P. T.

The Inspiration

With reference to the Spanish defeats in Morocco, it is pointed out that the colours of Spain, red and yellow, are the same as those of the M.C.C. It looks as though they also had similar Selection Committees. (31.8.21.)

THE INSPIRATION

It was essential to me to reach Bimblecombe, a matter of ten miles, but unfortunately I missed the last local train. I am not a good walker, but to hire was beyond my means and I prepared to tramp it. 'It's a main road with a sight o' traffic; I'll be bound you'll get a lift,' the porter said cheerily.

I started and during the first three hundred yards I was equally confident. Cars, lorries, vans, char-a-bancs, automobiles of every description were whizzing along in the direction of Bimblecombe. 'Why fag at all?' I said to myself. 'Why not just sit down under the hedge until a suitable car with a vacant seat comes along and then hail it?'

I selected a spot as free from stinging-nettles as I could find and sufficiently prominent to command a view of a long stretch of the road. Seated here I watched with eager eyes every approach of a car. If I saw that it contained accommodation for an extra person my breath came quick and short; as it came near enough for me to decipher the expression of the driver and I noted that it was genial my heart leapt tumultuously; when it was close upon me I rose, took a trembling step forward, opened my mouth and let the car flash past without making a sound or a sign to stop it.

It wasn't like stopping a horse and cart. My courage wouldn't have ebbed away before a dog-cart with the highest stepping steed, or a victoria or a landau or even a wagonette. But the thought of holding-up that lordly roaring engine, of bringing to a standstill all that rushing pomp and power, paralysed me.

For an hour I waited and saw automobiles of every description roll along to Bimblecombe, and at each one with a vacant seat I stared with hypnotic helplessness, the while my heart throbbed, my knees shook and my lips refused to utter a sound. One car, it is true, pulled

The Inspiration

up dead as I was in the act of making a nerveless step towards it, and the occupants were thrown forwards on their faces. From the violent expression made use of by the driver I gathered that he thought I intended to commit suicide. I could only raise my hat and assure him to the contrary. I felt that it was impossible under the circumstances to ask a favour. Another car slackened speed at sight of me, a silver-grey luxuriously appointed car entirely empty at the back. I was so excited that my breath forsook me entirely, and when the chauffeur leaned sideways and shouted, 'Right for Bimblecombe?' I could only nod my head in response.

Then, on the opposite side of the road, there lumbered along a lorry with 'W.D.' painted on its side. I followed it with my eyes until it was out of sight. Memory woke. 'I was a man once,' I said to myself, 'I haven't always been a paralysed worm huddled under a hedge afraid to stop any miserable insignificant civilian car on the road to Bimblecombe. By heaven! no! I have held-up staff-officers on the road to Ypres.' The recollection inspired me, my knees stiffened, my mouth set in a firm determined line. A car swept into view. It was going like a hurricane. I stepped abruptly into its path. I shot out my left arm. 'Halt!' I commanded. It obeyed on the instant. The driver went pale, the girl by his side looked on the point of swooning.

'Oh, I say, are you a plain-clothes Bobby? Don't run us in, there's a good chap. I only let her rip when the coast was clear. I wasn't drivin' to the danger.'

'Thirty-five to forty,' I said.

'She can't do it, not if she burst. Thirty's her limit.'

The girl lifted imploring eyes to me. 'Please believe him. We couldn't get to Bimblecombe under twenty minutes however much we tried.'

'I will ride with you to Bimblecombe and test the truth of your statements,' I said.

It was a delightful ride. They were a charming young couple and it was pleasant to know that they had not deceived me. The speedometer did not go beyond thirty at any moment.

B. W. C.

The Programme

One of the New Poor had a pretty compliment paid him one night last week. A burglar broke into his house. (7.9.21.)

THE PROGRAMME

The proof of the programme of 'Liberty Hall' had just been produced by Jones, who was stage-manager, advertising agent, etc., to the amateur society. All the company crowded round to see their own names in print, except Bowlby, who had a soul above programmes. The large smoking room, lent for rehearsals, was Bowlby's; the numerous articles required as 'properties' were collected from all over the house of Bowlby; Bowlby's too were the light refreshments and cigarettes which the company consumed during rehearsals.

Afterwards it was generally agreed that Bowlby had presumed too far on this admittedly strong position.

'By the way, Jones,' said Captain Mendip, who was cast for the part of the old bookseller, 'do you mind putting "R.N." after my name? You see "Captain Mendip" by itself might mean simply a Captain in the Army.'

'But you surely wouldn't mind it being thought that you were in the Army,' said Sybil Trench, looking admiringly at Bobby Pinkard, to whom she had just become engaged—secretly as she thought.

'The Army!' said Captain Mendip. 'Why, a Captain in the Navy ranks with a Colonel in the Army, whereas a Captain in the Army ranks with—with something like a ship's carpenter.' And, looking defiantly at everybody, Captain Mendip helped himself to Bowlby's whisky and Bowlby's soda, produced his cigarette-case, put it away again and took one of Bowlby's cigarettes, lit it with a match from Bowlby's box and carefully pocketed the box.

'Yes, certainly,' said Jones; 'I'll put that in.'

'I say,' said Bowlby testily, 'hadn't we better begin rehearsing?'

'Oh, Mr. Jones,' said Diana Clayton, 'will you put me down as "Miss Diana Clayton"? My aunt, Miss Clayton, of Clayton Hall,

The Programme

you know, gets so annoyed if I call myself "Miss Clayton". Only last week somebody wrote and congratulated her on seeing in the paper that she had been running with the Beagles. Poor old soul, she's nearly seventy.'

'Very well,' said Jones, amending the proof; 'now I think that's all right.'

But Jones's optimism was premature. Bobby Pinkard picked up the proof. 'I say,' he said, 'you might shove "Rutland Fusiliers" after my name. Plain Mr. Robert Pinkard looks as if I were a beastly civilian. Oh, I beg everybody's pardon, but you know what I mean.'

'Oh, hang it all,' said Bowlby, striding angrily back from the corner where he had been making love to a flower-stand, 'stick "M.A. (Oxon)" after my name, and my club and my telephone number and the number of prizes I won at school. Add a whole biography of each of us on a separate sheet, but for heaven's sake let's get on with the rehearsal.'

Audibly on the awkward silence which ensued broke the voice of Sybil Trench in earnest conversation with Diana Clayton.

'But really,' she said, 'you must none of you say a word about it, because we have decided not to announce our engagement till after the performance. Don't you think that would be rather romantic?'

'You see,' put in Bobby Pinkard in a hoarse whisper, 'I've already had a devil of a rumpus with the old man, my Colonel, you know; said he wouldn't have his officers fooling about on the stage. I fixed him up all right in the end; told him I was sure he'd get a complimentary ticket. If he gets to know about this engagement stunt now, it'll just about put the lid on, and he'll probably stop me acting altogether.'

'Well, at any rate,' said Bowlby, 'you won't any longer have to kiss the air about a foot and a half behind Miss Trench's head.'

'Well, I think we might begin the rehearsal now,' said Jones.

But just then the door opened and Mrs. Naylor came in. She was the inspirer of the performance and had undertaken to do the advertising and borrow everything from everybody.

The Programme

'Oh, Mr. Jones,' she said, 'I have been thinking that there are one or two things which ought to be inserted on the programme.'

Jones, taking out the proof and his pencil again, turned to her with the deference due to the lady whose husband would have to pay the deficit on the performance, besides sending a cheque to the charity.

'First of all, the Ladies' Orchestra,' said Mrs. Naylor; 'you must not forget that Miss Bevan takes such pains with it.'

'The Orchestra under the entire direction of Miss Edith Bevan,' wrote Mr. Jones.

'Then there are one or two things the loan of which we ought to acknowledge.'

'Certainly,' said Jones, looking anxiously at Bowlby.

'Higgins and Waltham,' continued Mrs. Naylor, 'very kindly lent us the oak suite in Act I; I think that ought to go in. Then the curtains used in Acts I and II are kindly lent by Hink and Sons.'

'I don't think we want to draw attention,' said Jones, 'to the fact that they are the same curtains, because, you see, Act I is in Chilworth Hall, and Act II in the back parlour of a second-hand book shop in Bloomsbury.'

'Very well,' said Mrs. Naylor; 'I'll send Mr. Hink two tickets instead.'

'Isn't it usual,' asked Diana Clayton, 'to say who made the dresses worn by the ladies?' She had had two new dresses made in Bond Street.

'And I think,' said Bowlby, 'that we ought to let people know where Pinkard got those riding-breeches that he wears in the first act.'

Bobby Pinkard blushed and muttered something about lying low about the breeches, as the tailor was dunning him for the bill.

Jones looked disconsolately at his proof, amended all over.

'Now is that all?' he asked.

'One thing more,' said Mrs. Naylor, 'the carpet. It really belongs to Simmons, the caretaker at the Assembly Rooms, and he always lends it. He's been so good about arranging the seats, I really think we ought to mention it.'

The Programme

'I know,' said Bowlby; 'I always trip up over the same old hole in it.'

'I think,' said Mrs. Naylor, 'I will procure a small rug to cover up the hole.'

'And where will you get that from?' said Jones, producing his pencil once more.

'Look here, Jones,' said Bowlby, 'you've got the deuce of a lot to do; hand over the programme to me. I'll fix it up and get it printed. I think I know all there is to go in it, and I'll make a thorough job of it.'

'It's very good of you,' said Jones; I should be awfully glad if you would.'

So Bowlby took the whole thing in hand and nobody thought any more of the programme until the audience were paying the exorbitant price of a shilling for this:

PROGRAMME

MR. OWEN . . .	Mr. George Bowlby (M.A. Oxon, Automobile Club, Barrister-at-Law; telephone, City 5302; any brief accepted.)
GERALD HARRINGAY .	Mr. Robert Pinkard (Rutland Fusiliers). (By kind permission of his Colonel.)
WILLIAM TODMAN .	Captain Mendip, R.N. (Ship's Carpenter.)
BLANCHE CHILWORTH.	Miss Diana Clayton. (Not to be confounded with her Aunt, Miss Clayton of Clayton Hall, Miss Diana being far younger.)
AMY CHILWORTH .	Miss Sybil Trench (whose engagement to Mr. Bobby Pinkard is just announced. Friends please accept this the only intimation.)

Remainder of cast and synopsis of scenery crowded out by the following advertisements:

The oak suite in Act I is an advertisement for Messrs. Higgins and Waltham, whose annual sale, at great reductions, commences next week.

The expensively bound books on the table in Act I commandeered from Mr. Bowlby's library; the second-hand books on the shelves in Act II mostly painted on the scenery.

The Programme

The matches used in lighting the fire in Act II by BRYANT AND MAY; those used by Captain Mendip to light his pipe in Act III taken from Mr. Bowlby's smoking-room.

Dresses worn by Miss Diana Clayton are by Madame Céleste.

Riding-breeches affected by Mr. Pinkard in Act I are on credit from Messrs. Falcon and Co., Army Tailors.

The suit worn throughout by Mr. Bowlby is his own. He has had it for years.

The kiss imprinted on the cheek of Miss Trench by Mr. Pinkard is a real one; enlarged prints may be seen behind the scenes between the Acts.

The Orchestra, which drowns Mr. Bowlby's best lines, is entirely out of the control of Miss Edith Bevan.

The carpet used in all three Acts is the one always lent by Simmons, and the small cheap rug which just covers the hole in it is the only thing that Mrs. Naylor could be induced to lend.

Bowlby acts elsewhere now.

R. T. L.

Things are now so quiet in Mexico you could almost hear a revolver go off. (21.9.21.)

'THE GREEN JAY'

Recalling Mr. O. Stark Batty's earlier works, *Lure o' Little Birdies* and *My Lady o' the Crooked Smile*, we do not hesitate to say that *The Green Jay* makes a distinct advance towards the essential Batty. Those clean uplifting stories of the Great West inspired many a reader with a restless desire to go West, too. *The Green Jay* almost turns that desire into a fixed resolve. This time Mr. Batty has deserted his beloved Molasses Valley and 'struck the trail' for the Great Barrens. Here, we feel, is his true intellectual home. His own mind is reflected in these vast, empty, uninhabited wastes. More than any of his previous work this book reveals him.

'The Green Jay'

As in *Lure o' Little Birdies* and *Down the Uphill Trail*, his new heroine is an adorable type of the American open-air girl. *Virgie Custis*—known to the trappers of Green Jay Gorge, as 'Forest Folk's friend'—has escaped to the wild because her guardians wish her to marry a New York millionaire whom she has never seen. Fiercely independent and scornful of wealth and luxury she wants to be free to choose a millionaire for herself. To her mountain home, the tiny log-built Shack o' Dreams, comes one evening a young man whom she shoots for a skunk by mistake. The friendship ripens:

"I'm real mad, though, big man," laughed the girl as she bandaged his arm with deft swift fingers. "You'd have made my five-hundredth pelt—skunk, lynx, musquash and isquish. Oh, I'm in with the bunch all right—all the fur-folk, the feather-folk, all the little wild Brothers o' Men!" Her face grew earnest, her eyes glowed tenderly. Her little friends hung all around the walls of the shack, each one a memento of happy days spent within easy range of Nature.

"The man looked at her gravely, square-chinned. A smile lurked in the sombre shadows of his eyes.

"Little Lady," he said suddenly, "is there room for another location in Green Jay Gorge? Listen. My yarn is a short one. A cultured home; Harvard; all the usual outfit. But—but—well, my father's will provides that I must marry the daughter of his old partner, William D. Custis, a girl I've never seen. So I just beat it, and here— Why, Little Lady, what is it?—what's the trouble?" The girl was looking at him wide-eyed, solemn.

"Listen!" she whispered through parted lips ("Like cherries," thought Jim suddenly. "They're just like li'l cherries.") "Listen! Do you hear what the Green Jay is saying, Big Man?"

'Way down the valley the Green Jay piped a mocking melody. Jim listened earnestly. "No," he sighed at last. "I know my name's Bonehead J. Dane, but that bird's got me guessing."

'That night a new trophy, the heart of a real Man, was added to the many spoils at Shack o' Dreams.'

The reader will have perceived the amazing ingenuity with which Mr. Batty has arranged this meeting of *Jim* and *Virgie*. We

'The Green Jay'

recall nothing more brilliant since the same author's *Beyond the Edge*, where *Josie* shoots *Tim* in mistake for a coon, and afterwards finds that he is the man her father wanted her to marry; or, at any rate, not since *Back o' Behind*, in which *Susie* poisons *Tim* in mistake for a coot, and then discovers he is the man her uncle had intended her to marry.

But we pass on to the wonderful scene in which the secret of the Green Jay's call is revealed:

Old Moon Chum looked down wisely on Shack o' Dreams.

"'Big Man,'" whispered the girl, her eyes shining ("Like stars," thought Jim, suddenly. "By heck, they're like li'l stars!") "'Big Man, do you know what the Green Jay is saying to-night? Can't you hear him? Oh, dull, stupid Big Kiddie Man—listen!'"

'Way down the valley the Green Jay still trilled out his sweet mocking cry: "O—you—Jay! . . . O—you—Jug—Jug—juggins! . . . O—you—Jay!"'

Big Man heard it then. Sure thing, he heard it. Back of his mind a Big Strange Word hovered—hung back.

"'Why—why, Forest Folk's Friend,'" he whispered hoarsely—"why, Little Lady o' Mine, it's *me* he means. It's *me*! . . .'"

Old Moon Chum beamed broadly on Shack o' Dreams. He was at the full.

Who can doubt that Mr. Batty is writing here from the deepest places of his own mentality, from a personal experience which most of us would be incapable of imparting to the world? We know that he *has* felt the influence of the full moon. Some woman *has* talked to him like that. The Green Jay *has* called to him. It *is* Him. He *is* It.

It is good to know that Mr. Stark Batty promises us a further chronicle of the Shack o' Dreams, wherein we are to see more of a delightful person who appears in the final chapter of *The Green Jay*, namely, 'Little Man Child of Ours'. If he turns out anything like his father we shall not be contented until we have turned over the very last page.

E. H. J.

The Dead Cat

From Leicester comes the extraordinary report that during a recent storm a local hen laid an egg as large as one of the hailstones. (4.1.22.)

THE DEAD CAT

This is a true story, but it is incomplete. It is perhaps better that it should be incomplete.

There was, and is still, a middle-aged single lady, whom we will call Miss Jane Pinkersley, living in a small flat in Kensington. She lives alone with a maid, who does not come into the story at all, and keeps, or rather kept, a cat called, let us say, Thomas. It is only necessary to state further that the flat, in common with a great many other flats, has no garden.

No attempt is being made in telling this story to be funny about the relations of a middle-aged spinster and her cat. Miss Pinkersley was very fond of Thomas, but not ridiculously so. She had had him some time, and he was company for her in the evenings and kept the mice away; and she was very sorry indeed when, for some reason unknown poor Thomas sickened and died.

Her natural impulse was to bury him decently. But here her difficulties began. I have mentioned that there was no garden in her flat, and a well-grown cat like Thomas cannot, for reasons which are sufficiently obvious, be interred in, say, a pot of basil, in a very small drawing-room. Miss Pinkersley was not foolish about it, but it did seem heartless to have him taken away by the dustman, even if the dustman would have accepted him as dust; and the idea of cremating him was most repugnant to her, besides being very difficult to carry out in a gas-fire.

Still, something had to be done, and in the end she purchased a little seaside spade and put it, together with Thomas wrapped in brown paper, into a small inconspicuous leather suit-case, and at twilight she set out for Hyde Park.

She made her way to a quiet spot near the Serpentine, where there are some flower-beds in a hollow; and, finding no one in sight, took out her spade and began her melancholy task. The ground was

The Dead Cat

soft and she was making good progress when she was horrified to find a policeman standing over her, and the next moment she was stammering helplessly in an endeavour to explain what she was doing there. It is feared that she gave but a very poor account of herself, as her distress was intensified by the perhaps reasonable suspicions of the policeman, who insisted on unrolling Thomas from his wrapper to satisfy himself that it was a cat and not a baby she was trying to dispose of. This point being settled, he told her rather gruffly that anyhow she could not bury him there, and had better go home. This she did, being watched all the way into the bus by the policeman, and ultimately arrived, safe but very much upset, back at her flat, with Thomas still in his suit-case. The spade she had lost somewhere on the way.

Her difficulty was, however, still unsolved. Thomas must be buried and it was becoming perceptible that Thomas must be buried soon. It suddenly occurred to her that, though her flat had no garden, other people lived in houses that had one; and with a feeling of unspeakable relief she took a pen and wrote explaining the situation to a friend who had a small place some thirty miles from London. The friend replied in the friendliest possible manner, and Miss Pinkersley started off for Charing Cross more at ease in her mind than at any time since Thomas's death. Thomas accompanied her, packed as before.

The train was very full, but, thanks to the courtesy of a young gentleman who gave her his seat, she suffered but little discomfort, and in due course arrived at her destination, where she found her friend waiting for her on the platform. Together they walked to the house, which was only a little distance away, and immediately on arrival gave the suit-case to the gardener, with instructions for Thomas's interment. Then they went in to tea, to jest and make light of troubles happily surmounted.

After the meal they strolled out into the garden, and there they found the gardener, standing before a hole under a pear-tree in a state of very grave bewilderment. The suit-case lay open upon the ground, and inside it was a complete evening kit for a gentleman attending a formal dinner-party.

The Dead Cat

The rest of the story, which would deal with the unpacking of Thomas, is, as was suggested at the beginning, perhaps fortunately missing.

E. S. K. R.

The next agitation says 'Caledonian' in an evening paper, 'will be for Scottish Home Rule'. The general impression is that we have already got it in England. (18.1.22.)

A FEW SAMPLES

Did you notice it—that peculiar phrase in a speech of the Right Honourable ———, Minister of ———, the other day? He was reported to have said that 'the financial position of the country at the present time is very smooth and of an excellent nutty flavour'. A curious utterance; and I happen to know how it came to be attributed to him, for my friend George Rowland is his Private Secretary, prepares his speeches for him and hands the notes of them to the Press. And this was how it happened.

Every two or three months I lay down a few bottles of port—by the pair. I buy wine by the pair because my cellar, consisting of the bottom shelf of the grocery cupboard, will not accommodate any very considerable hogshead or bin. And as a rule I buy it in this way. Entering my wine merchant's (for I would have you know that I have a merchant of my very own) I say politely, 'I want some nice port, please'.

'Certainly, Sir,' says the immaculate Mr. Jones. 'A dozen—or two?'

'A bottle—or two,' I correct him gently. Mr. Jones looks at my clothes, remarks curtly, 'Bring up a couple of the Armistice, Tom,' and disappears.

Tom at last produces two rather new-looking bottles, sealed with rather fresh-looking sealing-wax and says, 'This is our Armistice port, Sir'.

A Few Samples

I say firmly, 'Are you sure this is a *nice* port?'

He says firmly, 'Yes, Sir, I am sure it will suit you very well'.

Then I know that I have got a good thing, and I carry it home by the Underground Railway.

When George had dined with me once or twice he asked me rather rudely what chemist I went to for my wine. When I told him 'Jones and Jones' he said, 'Good heavens! that's where my chief gets *his*. They ought to give you something better than *this*. I shall have to take you there myself'.

He took me there. He took me there one Monday after lunch. He stalked superbly past Mr. Jones and sat down superbly in an inner sanctum, with the air of a man about to buy a barrel of Waterloo brandy. Mr. Jones came in after us and inquired politely after the Minister's health. The change in him was extraordinary; he simply fawned.

George said, 'My friend here proposes to give a dinner—in fact, a series of dinners; and he wants some *really* good wine. Now what about some sherry?'

'Certainly,' said Mr. Jones. 'Would you be taking it with the fish, or *before* the dinner?'

'Both,' said George grandly.

'Then I can recommend *this*,' said Mr. Jones. So saying he seized a bottle from a shelf, smartly removed the cork and poured out three full brown glasses. 'A rich old-fashioned wine, Mr. Rowland,' he remarked with emotion as he rolled a little round his tongue and gazed profoundly at George. George rolled half a glassful round his tongue (it is a large one) and gazed profoundly at Mr. Jones.

'Too dry,' he said with contempt, and drained his glass to the dregs.'

Mr. Jones was not daunted. 'I wonder how you would like our No. 380?' he said; and he presented us each with a beautiful catalogue, in the manner of an author giving away his own works. No. 380 was described as 'dark in colour and very intense from age in cask. Has a markedly vinous flavour'.

'Very well; open a bottle of that,' said George graciously.

I gasped, but Mr. Jones obsequiously obeyed.

A Few Samples

When it came, George first smelled it, then sipped it suspiciously, then rapidly emptied his glass, at which Mr. Jones smiled to himself with conscious pride. 'A very generous wine,' he murmured. 'Very rich and generous in character.'

What was my horror (and Mr. Jones's) when I observed a look of loathing pass over my friend's face, as if he had taken some nauseating drug.

'Not dry enough,' he snapped—'not *nearly* dry enough! Don't you agree?'

I hastily agreed: though indeed I was still toying with my first glass.

Mr. Jones winced and offered a third brand of sherry, which was 'smooth, clean on the palate and medium dry'; but George waved him aside. 'Chablis,' he said imperiously. 'My friend always gives oysters at his dinners.'

George knows perfectly well that I never gave away an oyster in my life. I opened my mouth to protest and received a violent kick on the ankle. I was silent.

Tom was sent downstairs for a special Chablis, 'very flavoury and full of style and of great vinosity'. When he had gone George murmured reflectively, 'I'm not sure that I wasn't *wrong* about that second sherry after all, Mr. Jones. Let me try it again, will you?'

Mr. Jones beamed. 'I *thought* you'd say that,' he answered, as he poured out about three-shillingsworth. 'This is a wine you can come back to *again and again*. And we are practically giving it away. What we are asking for it will scarcely pay for the *bottling*.'

'This shop is really a sort of charity, you see,' murmured George to me. This seemed to be no more than the truth, and I thought that it ill became George to be ironical about it.

This time he licked his lips and said, 'A pleasant wine, but too *rich*. My friend likes a sherry with rather less *body* to it. *Don't* you?'

I duly made a vague murmur expressive of a deep distaste for body in sherry. Mr. Jones regarded me with ill-concealed contempt.

Events then moved very rapidly. It took George a glass and a half of the Chablis to make up his mind about it; and when he did the things he said about it were quite violent. After that he had a

A Few Samples

go at some of the more expensive champagnes. It was at the second champagne—the 1904—that it crossed my mind that George was losing his reserve of manner. Of this wine the catalogue said that it had ‘developed strikingly with age in bottle, and the roundness now shown makes it none too dry’. The meaning of this escaped me, but George tossed off a glass, and holding it out for replenishment, shouted cheerfully, ‘It’s too *round*, Mr. Jones. It’s much too *round*! By gad, it’s not fit to drink. *Give me some more.*’

Mr. Jones’s beam had become a little watery by this time, but he complied. He now turned to me for my opinion. Feeling that an effort was required of me, I sniffed at my glass with distrust, listened to it carefully, took a cautious sip and, following George’s lead, remarked severely, ‘I like a *square* wine’. We then passed on to the port.

I have but a hazy memory of what followed, but I know that even Mr. Jones became a little excited over the various ports George sampled (I say George—for very soon I was laps and laps behind). And I remember Mr. Jones saying with great reverence, ‘Now *this*, Mr. Rowland, is something *really* choice. Soft and full—good body—and with a rich plummy flavour——’

And then George burst into song. Waving his glass, and to a tune which was only faintly reminiscent of an air from *The Beggar’s Opera*, he sang,

‘*Fill every glass,
For wine is plummy and clean on the palate,
Smooth and round,
Vinous and soft,
From age in cask;
Fill every glass. . . .*’

And I suppose that at that point we left the shop. I only remember dimly that Mr. Jones said something about my making a purchase, which seemed to me to be rather pointless at the time. And I have a hideous, hideous suspicion that I replied carelessly, ‘Oh, send me a couple of your Armistice port, Mr. Jones’.

A Few Samples

But I clearly remember navigating George back to Whitehall, still humming:

*'Fill every glass,
For wine is plummy and clean on the palate. . . .'*

And I know very well why the Right Honourable ——— is reported to have told his constituents that 'the financial situation of the country at the present time was very smooth and of an excellent nutty flavour'.

A. P. H.

THE POWER OF THE PRESS

From *The Daily Gale*:

April 10th, 1923.—We have good reason to believe that one of the means suggested to the Chancellor of the Exchequer of raising money to repair the ravages of Waste is the imposition of a Tax on Perambulators. Our readers will know from past experience how much importance to attach to the indignant denials which may be expected from the inspired Government Press.

April 11th, 1923.—The proposal to raise money by taxing perambulators is proving very attractive to the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

April 12th, 1923.—Waste and Squandermania have bled the country white, but anything so iniquitous as a Perambulator Tax must be fought both tooth and nail.

April 13th, 1923.—The country must be on its guard against the insidious efforts now being made to bring about a Tax on Perambulators.

April 14th, 1923.—The whole country is now thoroughly roused by the revelations of *The Daily Gale* with regard to the threatened Tax on Perambulators. On page 7 to-day appears a powerful article on Perambulators by a Mother of Nineteen.

April 16th, 1923.—Nothing has stirred the country so much in recent years as *The Daily Gale* campaign against the Tax on

The Power of the Press

Perambulators. From all parts correspondence supporting our action is pouring in.

April 17th, 1923.—The imminent danger of a Tax on Perambulators must be resisted at all costs. *The Daily Gale* will play its part.

April 18th, 1923.—*The Daily Gale* fight against the Perambulator Tax has aroused enormous enthusiasm throughout the country. To-morrow an important development will be announced.

April 19th, 1923.—To-day we print a form of Petition against the Perambulator Tax which the Chancellor of the Exchequer proposes to introduce. *It is YOUR urgent duty to sign without delay and forward it to your Member of Parliament.*

April 20th, 1923.—SIGN TO-DAY!

April 21st, 1923.—SIGN TO-DAY AND EVERY DAY!

April 23rd, 1923.—SIGN TO-DAY, EVERY DAY AND SEVERAL TIMES A DAY!

April 24th, 1923.—No movement in the last century has met with such amazing success as *The Daily Gale* Petition against the Perambulator Tax. Tens of thousands of the signed forms are pouring into the House of Commons.

April 25th, 1923.—The whole country is stirred to its depths by excitement over *The Daily Gale* Petition. The number of forms delivered at the House of Commons yesterday was sufficient to fill two battleships.

April 26th, 1923.—Five thousand motor-lorries were hired by the Post Office yesterday to assist in the delivery of countless sacks of *Daily Gale* petitions at the House of Commons.

April 27th, 1923.—THERE IS STILL TIME TO SIGN!

April 28th, 1923.—Again a grave menace to the welfare of the nation has been averted by *The Daily Gale*. The Budget introduced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer yesterday makes no provision for a Tax on Perambulators. *Daily Gale* readers may well be proud to think that they exerted the pressure which forced the Government at the last moment to abandon this disastrous scheme. The statement of the Chancellor that no such Tax had ever been considered by the Government will be taken for what it is worth by those who have studied the revelations published exclusively in *The*

The Power of the Press

Daily Gale. We regret the levity with which the Chancellor saw fit to allude to this grave subject; *the fact remains that once more 'The Daily Gale' and its readers have saved England.*

R. F. W.

'During the War,' says a Labour M.P., 'we were fighting for dear life.' So we can't complain now we've got it. (8.2.22.)

THE MISSING MONKEYS

A long stone-paved corridor in which a few scattered electric lights carry on a losing contest with the gloom. Ranged along either side are tanks of dull green water where fish of various kinds swim mournfully about or mouth dumbly at the glass. Outside it is day, but here eternal twilight seems to reign; a sound of dripping water fills the air and occasional footsteps echo and reverberate with a note of doom.

The man at the turnstile told me that I was just in time to see the fish fed, but at present nothing seems to be happening. I turn my attention to the first tank, in which a solitary crab is stalking with a mysterious air of purpose through a jungle of anemones.

'Wot's the good o' that?' suddenly breaks in a discontented voice. I turn to meet the questioning gaze of a small man carrying a paper bag.

'Of what?' I inquire.

'*That*,' he repeats, indicating the tank with the stem of his pipe. 'Annie moans. 'Oo wants to look at *them*?''

I venture to remark that I do for one.

'P'raps so,' he concedes after a moment's thought. 'They're all right in their way, I s'pose—for them that *likes* 'em. But answer me queshun. Are they worth eightpence?'

'Worth eightpence?' I echo, staring.

'Zac'ly me point,' he assents obscurely. 'You're right—they're *not*.'

The Missing Monkeys

Evidently well satisfied he pauses to relight his pipe, then suddenly fixes me with an accusing eye.

'Where's the monkeys?' he demands in aggrieved tones. In the face of anything as unexpected as this I am quite speechless.

'Fore the War,' he resumes severely, 'there used to be monkeys 'ere, an' now they've bin an' gone an' taken 'em away. Wot right they got to do that?'

I murmur my sympathy at his bereavement.

'Fourpence it used to be,' he pursues, 'to see the fish with monkeys thrown in. Now it's eightpence for fish without monkeys. Where's the sense in that?'

'It takes some finding,' I admit.

'You're right,' he assents. 'Tell yer wot—if you feel like goin' round to the pay-box an' makin' a row about it I'm quite ready to back you up.'

Providentially at this moment he darts hurriedly from my side to join a general rush of sightseers towards the opposite tank, before which an official in brass buttons has just taken up his stand. With a glance round his audience, the latter taps with a key upon the glass, whereupon a ghostly presence becomes dimly visible at a skylight above, and in due course a cloud of small food morsels descends into the tank.

'Bull head, whiting and plaice,' announces Brass Buttons in tones of acute boredom. 'Fed on shrimps.'

With the air of one who does not mean to have his time wasted by any stupid curiosity he leads relentlessly on to the next tank, followed in docile fashion by his audience. Again the ghostly presence manifests itself above and the performance is repeated. Suddenly the harmony of the proceedings is disturbed by the voice of the man with the paper bag, coming from the outskirts of the group.

'That ain't nothin',' he states emphatically.

The audience turn and eye him in silence.

'Oo wants to see a lot o' bloomin' fish guzzlin' shrimps?' he demands. 'Why, I cud do that *meself*.'

The keeper, who does not seem disposed to dispute this claim, regards him unmoved.

The Missing Monkeys

'Well, what of it?' he inquires.

'Wot of it?' echoes the other indignantly. 'Why, where's the monkeys? That's wot *we* want to know.'

'There's no monkeys here now,' says the keeper shortly.

'Jest wot I'm complainin' of,' rejoins the small man. 'Wot right you got to abstract the monkeys without informin' nobody?'

'What d'ye mean—abstract the monkeys?' exclaims the keeper with the first approach to emotion that he has yet shown. 'I haven't abstracted any monkeys. Got something better to do with my time.'

'Never mind 'oo abstracted 'em,' retorts the malcontent firmly. 'You 'old official persition 'ere an' I make you responsible. Wot right you got to charge eightpence for fish without monkeys?'

With a glance of disgust the keeper ignores him and, turning, leads on to the next tank.

'Common stickleback,' he announces sourly.

'Not worth seein',' interpolates the persistent small man, who has followed with the rest. The keeper glowers at him out of the corner of one eye.

'Fed on filleted whiting,' he adds.

'That ain't nothin' neether,' declares the interrupter. 'Show us some monkeys.'

With an obvious effort the goaded keeper controls himself.

'The lifetime of the common stickleback,' he resumes with suppressed wrath, 'is about five years.'

'Wot's the lifetime of a monkey?' inquires the small man freshly.

'Oh, dry up about your blessed monkeys,' suddenly bursts forth an anaemic-looking woman with a green feather in her hat. 'Why can't you keep quiet and let other people enjoy the fish?'

'Enjoy the fish!' echoes the small man resentfully. 'I never came 'ere to enjoy no fish. I came 'ere to see the monkeys.'

'Then go and look at yourself in the glass!' retorts Green Feather triumphantly. 'You'll *see* one then.'

There is an outburst of amusement from the group, who seem to appreciate this very much indeed.

'That's what *you'd* better do,' adds Green Feather, elated by success. 'Much more like a monkey than a man *you* are?'

The Missing Monkeys

'Ho!' observes the discomfited small man and regards her for a while with intense hostility. 'P'raps I am,' he concedes at last. 'An' p'raps there's other people that's like other things. P'raps *you're* more like a *fish*.'

'You keep a civil tongue in your head!' exclaims the woman, flushing angrily.

'Much more like a fish than wot you're like a woman,' pursues her adversary with relish. 'A flat-fish—that's wot *you* resemble.'

'Now then,' sharply interposes an athletic-looking man on the outskirts of the group, 'that's no way to talk to a lady. Just you be'ave yourself.'

'So I am be'aving meself,' asserts the small man defiantly.

'Call *that* be'aving yourself?' demands the incensed stranger. 'Coming 'ere comparing ladies to fish.'

'An' wot about 'er comin' 'ere comparin' me to a monkey?' retorts the other hotly.

'Serve you right if she did,' declares his critic. 'She's got a right to compare you to what she likes. She's a *woman*.'

'Glad to 'ear it,' replies the small man satirically. 'I shud never 'ave guessed it meself. Personally I think she'd look better swimmin' about in one o' them tanks.' And, regardless of an angry murmur from the bystanders, he turns and addresses a little group of children who are peering into the tank with their noses flattened to the glass.

'Stand out of the way there,' he urges, 'an' let the lady 'ave a look at 'er relations!'

Simultaneously the athletic man, who has pushed his way through the group, extends a brawny hand and grasps him by the ear.

'Outside!' he commands briefly.

'Ere, wot's the game?' squeals the small man in astonished protest. Without a word his captor wheels him round and marches him discomfited to the bend of the corridor. There he releases his ear and, giving him a powerful shove round the corner, returns to the tank.

'Carry on, mate,' he remarks tranquilly to the keeper. 'You've 'eard the last of *'im*.'

The Missing Monkeys

Presently, however, his prediction is falsified, for of a sudden a strange hollow voice comes rolling and reverberating through the corridor.

'Where's the monkeys?' it booms. 'I never paid eightpence to see a woman like a flat-fish.'

The athletic man slews round and takes a few quick steps towards the sound. Instantly a tremendous clatter is heard beyond the bend and the noise of swiftly retreating footsteps echoes down the stone passage. Gradually the sounds die away and all is silence save for the continued drip of water and the toneless voice of the keeper resuming his observations on the common stickleback.

I. A.

A new ball game called 'Disco', which promises to have a future has just been demonstrated in Battersea Park. It may even become sufficiently popular in England for a foreign country to win the championship. (9.8.22.)

HOW NOT TO SAY GOOD-BYE

A HOLIDAY HINT FOR AUNTS

Every year Henry, the Kid and I spend our holiday in Scotland. This is to give Henry an opportunity to tread on his native heath, and possibly to disprove the statement that a Scotsman never returns to his country after leaving it, unless it is to fetch down a younger brother.

Henry has not got a younger brother, but he has an aunt. This is not an airy statement from *French Without Tears*. It is a solid fact.

Now, we do not stay with Henry's aunt on our holiday; at times we forget even to visit her. But she always gets to know the date of our departure and presents herself at the station 'to see us off'.

You know the kind of thing. We are seated in a crowded carriage. There is a chill silence while we all regard each other with that suspicion, distrust and reserve which mark the Britisher when coming into contact with those of his fellow creatures to whom he has

How *not* to Say Good-bye

not been formally introduced. Suddenly Henry's aunt presents her bovine face at the window. This is our annual dialogue:

Aunt (with the air of one who is making an original bon mot). Well, you'll soon be off now.

Henry. Yes.

Aunt. But it's a pity the train is so crowded (*looking disparagingly at the other passengers*). I do hope you'll be comfortable. Shall I go and see if there's a better carriage lower down?

Henry (nervously). No, no.

Aunt (looking at the Kid). It's a pity, my dear, that you're such a bad traveller. But, of course, if you should be sick. . . . (*Movement of consternation among passengers and horrible embarrassment of the Kid.*)

Me (hastily). Oh, she's grown out of that now. (*General relief.*)

Aunt. Now you'll be sure to let me know you've arrived safely. And (*skittishly*) tell me how London's looking.

Us. Yes, yes.

Aunt. There's such a lot of people coming. I hope they won't want to come and stand in here. (*Again looks round disparagingly.*) It's bad enough as it is. I hope you'll be all right.

Us (hurriedly). Yes, yes.

Aunt. Well, you'll soon be off now. You'll be sure to write, won't you? Shall I ask a porter what time you arrive in London?

Us (emphatically). No, no, thanks.

Aunt (to the Kid). I brought some peppermints for you, my dear. If you suck them slowly there's enough to last the whole journey. (*Signs of exasperation amongst the other passengers.*) Perhaps they'll ward off the sickness too, though I always say it's best *not* to check sickness. I'll get you a paper to read, my dear. (*Happy respite of a few minutes while she goes to a bookstall. She returns breathless.*)

Aunt (panting). I thought the train was moving off. Here you are, dear. (*Pant.*) I got *Comic Chips*. I hope it isn't too advanced for you. Where are you at school?

The Kid (very nervously). In the Lower Fourth, Auntie.

Aunt. Well, well, that tells me nothing. (*Vaguely.*) We used to go by the sums we did when I was a girl. (*Looks round with a smirk*

How *not* to Say Good-bye

at the other passengers, who receive her coldly.) Well, you'll soon be off now. Perhaps I'd better kiss you good-bye at once. (*Does so.*) And I do hope (*addressing me*) you won't get one of your bad headaches with travelling, my love. Insist on having the window down the whole way, no matter what other people——

Me (hastily, conscious of the growing unpopularity of our party among our fellow passengers.) No, no, Aunt. I never get headaches now.

Aunt. Well, good-bye until next year. I only hope I shall be spared to see you off again.

Me (with conviction). I'm quite sure you will.

Aunt. But you never know. Every time I see you off I say, 'Another milestone'. (*Disagreeable-looking man in the corner rattles his paper irritably.*) Good-bye. Oh, did I tell you Cousin Jane might be coming south this year?

Us (now quite limp and dejected). Indeed?

Aunt. Of course she'll look you up. Oh, now you really are going. He's signalling. Shall I ask——

Us. No, no. (*The train begins to move.*)

Aunt (trying to keep up with the train). Good-bye. You'll write me (*pant*). You'll be sure (*pant*) and let me know that you've arrived safely. Good-bye. You really are off now. Don't forget to——

Mercifully we can hear no more of aunt—for another year.

MRS. F. A. K.

Sympathy is felt for the short-sighted gentleman who, seeing a walrus at the Zoo the other day, shouted, 'Beaver?' (16.8.22.)

REMARKABLE EXPERIENCES WITH A MEDIUM

I set what follows in diary form because it is scientific. I am *trained* in science. I attended female evening classes in it for a year at Balham.

Remarkable Experiences with a Medium

All these notes were taken down *at the time*. I have had lessons in *writing* shorthand, though I cannot *read* it yet. A young gentleman, a friend of ours, who plays the flute and can read music *at sight*, has copied them out for me.

The room where we seanced was *absolutely* bare, except, of course, for the usual table, chairs and screens and a large bust of Garibaldi or Napoleo, I think, and an ottoman. Absolutely nothing to arouse suspicion. I examined the bust myself. The wire that goes round the room, Madame assured me, is to hang pictures on.

EXTRACTS FROM DIARY

April 1st.—Barometer rising. Wind N.E. Cloudy. Little Fido had toothache in the night. Called in vet. Brother took me to medium's for special sitting. The medium or, as she calls herself, being highly educated and knowing Greek, the *media*, most impressive and the soul of candour, with a cameo brooch. Before we sat down she said sternly, 'You have an aurora?'

I told her darling Fido was a pekinese and would not hurt anybody.

She asked me if we lived in the Astral Plain. My brother told her that we had lived for years in Upper Tooting. 'Upper' and 'Astral'—*perhaps* a mere coincidence.

She said, 'I hope your brother is not a septic as with such an atmosphere untoward results might follow?'

My poor brother, who suffers from colds in the head, *will* drench himself with eucalyptus, but Madame said that was all right, as they do the same in the Beyond on account of the draught.

Nothing abnormal at first sitting. Incident of wires shaking and making Fido growl. Incident of ankle-bite; Fido very highly strung. One guinea.

Media requested not bring dog. A 'sensitive' dog—a Skye terrier—she told us, once chased astral body of cat all round room. Six mirrors smashed. Bit cat under sofa. Cat went mad. Projected to Tibet, where it thinks itself a Llama. Will keep Fido at home in future.

April 4th.—54 degrees Fahrenheit. Got a great start. Media

Remarkable Experiences with a Medium

shrieked, 'I see a Gee!' But it was the letter G. My *fiancé's* name, who plays on the flute, is Gussy. It *may* have been a guess. Media says she never guesses but just senses along the psychic trail.

She next smelled an M, a foreigner. A name something like Mruph and a v somewhere. My brother said he knew a Murphy. Media then said there would be money troubles shortly if not already here. True to the *smallest* particular. A man named Murphy, who always calls the English 'foreigners', owes my brother for the loan of a five-pound note.

Media warned my brother to beware of a little man with dark eyes. He said he knew it. It was the same Murphy. He had given him a pair in the course of their colloquy.

Restless night. I fear Fido is becoming a medium. He was making noises like one all night.

April 7th.—Barometer falling. I do not understand what follows. Media told us that if we wanted a direct message we could mention a name. Thinking of the days when I studied science, I cried, 'What about dear old Euclid?'

Euclid asked my brother if he knew a man called Ian Stein. My brother said 'No'. Euclid was *very* angry. He shouted, 'There is *no* kink in space. I've been there and I ought to know. He hasn't. Q.E.D.'

He then upset the table and vanished.

Media said she believed it must be some new scientific theory, but she had always thought 'Euclid' was the name of a book.

Dreamed all night of Euclid swinging on parallel bars that kept on meeting.

April 8th.—High tide at London Bridge 2.30. Media said she would give, through *poor little me*, a message to the world which should convince even a septic or any other kind of atheist.

Experiment under test conditions. We tied Media's feet and saw ourselves that the gas was out. Music resounded. After a pause Media said, 'Hush! I see a book—a big book. Hush! I see a B. A woman. By a woman. Hush! Beeton. She is near us. Hush! Message to the world, page 111. Read. Meditate. Circulate. Hush!'

She then came out of the trance and absent-mindedly collected

Remarkable Experiences with a Medium

her fees *twice*. She did not remember anything she had told us. The inexplicable, she said, sometimes remained enigmatic.

We rushed to the nearest library and found the book—a cookery book. But there must have been some mistake. We could find *no* message to the world on page 111 of the edition we consulted, but simply a short article on ‘How to Pluck Geese’.

M. D.

The Coué method as applied to the nation: ‘Every day and in every way we get debter and debter’. (7.9.22.)

A SOMERSET MYSTERY

(As related by the Oldest Liar in our District)

Round by that corner by Moggs’s farm, that bit o’ road had got vurry bad, vurry bad, turrible full o’ hooles, well-nigh dangerous. So the Chumpton Chedzoy Urban Council sent along for to patch her, ye see. Duddy were the feller they sent. Duddy.

Duddy were the best feller they could send undoubted, for he had been employed by the U.D.C. for what must ha’ been well-nigh a hundred years, and what he didn’t knoo about patching a hoole were not knowledge. And they gav’ him two other chaps to help ’un—young Farrney, a fine strong chap of about sixty-eight, and the other a much younger lad named Burrt, who couldn’t ha’ been more ’n about fifty-five.

Well, these lads they came along one morn for to put that bad bit o’ road to rights; and they start a-picking of she with their pickaxes, and that bad bit o’ road she come up fine. And when they got her up real fine, old Duddy he stood thurr and he looked at she and he give his head a bit of a scratch with his pickaxe, and he say in the way he do speak:

‘Tharr burr noo burr t’l yegurr tharr roor.’

And young Farrney, he say, ‘Oooo, ay.’ And the boy agree with ’un. So off they goes for to see to what they planned.

So, after hearing what they planned, the Chumpton Chedzoy

A Somerset Mystery

Council they sends to the Ham Blotton Council and say: 'Knowing as how be you got one o' them steam-rollers, could it so be that you could let us have the loan of he, so as we can rool down that bad bit o' road we got by Moggs's corner?' And the Ham Blotton Council, they say, 'Ay'. And sure enough one morn, not more four or five weeks later, maybe, down the road by Moggs's corner come this here steam-rooler; and thurr stood old Duddy and Farrney and the lad, all with their shovels ready an' all for to aim back the bits o' road under the roolers of he.

They manages a tidy bit that day, and off they go at even; and the chap with the rooler he leaves he in the middle of the road, all ready for to carry on rooling come the morn.

And come the morn the Ham Blotton folk they open their eyes and they see a murricle—that's what they see, a murricle. For they open their eyes, and thurr in the main street o' Ham Blotton, thurr stood that same rooler. And how he come back thurr to his native town during the night be a murricle to all. No one see he or hear he, but thurr, come the morn, in his native town, thurr he be by a murricle.

And the Chumpton Council they say, 'Oo, if that rooler find his way home by a murricle, let 'un bide'. And the Ham Blotton folk say, 'Ay, let 'un bide; and if that bit o' road be full o' hooles, 'tis only one bit o' road, so let 'un bide'. So they let 'un bide.

And 'twere not till some time later they larned the truth o' this murricle. And the truth were this. Round Moggs's corner that night had come one of these young chaps driving one of these mooters. So fast he were going he might easy ha' done some damage to the rooler, but by the mercy o' Providence he pull up just in time. But he can't pass he, so what should he do but get into the rooler, and, thinking he knew how to govern these here roolers, he gets up steam, and down the road out of the way of his carr he start for to drive the rooler. That's where he reckoned his crop before harvest. He can start he, he can steer he, but he can't stop he. All he can do is for to get carried on until that rooler stop for himself, which he did outside o' the Stag Inn at Ham Blotton.

But even when they hear that it weren't after all no murricle, the

A Somerset Mystery

Chumpton folk say, 'Oo, let 'un bide'. And the Ham Blotton folk they say, 'Oo ay, better let 'un bide'. And that's how that corner by Moggs's come to bide in that bad way, as it were told me; though I can't say whether it likely be true, not being well acquainted with the right way to govern these here roolers.

B. T.

The trouble with the modern dance is that by the time you have learned it, it isn't. (18.10.22.)

A GREAT LIAR

Most people have met a liar. If you haven't I know of no better place for making good this defect than the smoke-room of a West African liner. Why this should be I don't know; but so it is. The beginner can learn a lot there. Men who have been truthful from boyhood up make one voyage and then start to tell lies.

Coming home recently from West Africa I drifted into the smoke-room on the first day of the voyage about 6 p.m.—an hour to go before the first dinner bugle—and found assembled a cluster of sportsmen swopping lies about things they had shot. They were all of a certain youthfulness, except one, who was grizzled and lined and tanned, his eyes deep-sunk; and when he wasn't chewing the stem of his pipe he was worrying at his moustache. Spare he was, and silent. I put him down as a prospector or mining engineer, with Bolivia, India, Mexico, Australia and Tanganyika behind him.

The Young Lads went on talking. You'd never believe the experiences they'd had. The rhinos they'd hunted round and round a giant ant-hill. The two hundred pounds' worth of ivory they'd got from one elephant. The lion and leopard they'd bagged with a right and a left. The hippos they'd stabbed mortally with a *machete* from a canoe. And so on.

It was great, and I loved every moment of it.

Towards seven o'clock the supply of veracious experiences showed signs of petering out. There are limits. And still the Ancient

A Great Liar

in the corner had not spoken. So one of the Young Lads gave tongue again to ask him, 'Now, Sir, you've been years on the Coast, surely you've had some curious things happen to you?'

And the Old One answered and said, 'Only one. And that was in October last year. I started out alone one evening with a .22 bore rook rifle, hoping to get a guinea-fowl or a bush-fowl. I hadn't gone far from my bungalow when, upon rounding a corner in the path, I came bang on top of a lion.' And he paused.

'Yes,' jumped in one of the Young Lads; 'did he clear off?'

'No,' replied the Ancient slowly, 'he didn't. Being flurried, I pooped off at him with the rook rifle.'

'Great Scott!' said another of the Young Lads. 'You got him through the eye into the brain, I expect? Dashed risky thing to do, though, trying to shoot a lion with a .22 rifle.' This very knowingly.

'No,' answered the Mining Man, 'I got him in the ear; the merest flesh-wound, which only irritated him.'

'Heavens!' said a third Young Lad, 'what happened then?'

'Who to?' drawled the old man. 'The lion? Nothing. The brute just knocked me over and ate me up. He seemed thoroughly cross.'

J. F.

'Unionists defeated by sheer weight of numbers,' a Belfast paper comments on the recent Tyrone election. Irish elections have never been what they were since the question of mere brute numbers was allowed to intrude. (29.11.22.)

'JAMAIS'

After dinner Thompson led the way down to the basement. He had often spoken to me about his billiard-room, and I could see pride rippling in every muscle of his back. He flung open the door and fumbled with the switch. Three lights sprang into softest radiance over the faded green of a very second-hand three-quarter table.

'Jamais'

The nearest light repented immediately and went out, leaving baulk in gloom.

'I was afraid of that,' said Thompson. 'When people in this house want a decent bulb they come down here and get one—new lamps for old, you know. But I expect we can rub along with two. Take your choice,' he added, waving to the cue-rack.

An English bowman of the time of Crecy might have rubbed his hands at this invitation; but I stood undecided.

'That one's got a tip,' said Thompson.

'So it has,' I said, and I drew it forth.

'You break, then,' said Thompson, after the preliminary line-out.

His words were prophetic. From out of the dusk of baulk my ball sped noisily over the undulating central expanse and, with the aid of a dead fly, struck the red in the flank. Without fuss the red parted into hemispheres, and its assailant made a triumphant circuit of the table, ultimately coming to rest by the barricade of green stitches in front of one of the middle pockets.

'I was afraid of that,' said Thompson. 'We'll have to play with one of the pyramid balls now. Blow! the tip's off my cue. Never mind, I've got some new stuff here—"Jamais" cement; it sticks anything in two minutes. You don't mind waiting? I'm rather attached to this cue.'

'We're all like that—even Lauder,' I said.

'I expect so,' said Thompson absently. He leant over the table and, pouring liquid from a small bottle on to the end of his cue, adjusted the tip. Then he placed another red ball on the spot. 'Now then, try again.'

This time I misjudged the country and missed by inches.

'Haven't got your eye in yet,' said Thompson encouragingly.

He now glanced along the curves of his cue and was fortunate enough to get in his stroke just before the middle light flickered and expired. His ball threaded its way unerringly up the table. Without altering its position the red butted its puny adversary over the nearest cushion.

'You have a go at him,' said Thompson.

In turn with him I had several goes. But the red laughed at our

'Jamais'

efforts to dislodge it. Our backs ached with picking up balls. It reminded me of the old ping-pong days. Suddenly Thompson's cue, falling foul of some loose stitches, slid half its length beneath the cloth.

'I was afraid of that,' said Thompson. 'We shall get bunkered now if we're not careful.'

He was right. The yawning gulf gaped right in front of the red. Three times my ball burrowed mole-like beneath the cloth, and had to be beaten out with the butt-ends of our cues.

Thompson bent his brows after the fashion of the German generals before Verdun. 'Let's tackle it together,' he suggested.

We did. Discharged from baulk at a preconcerted signal, Spot and Plain hurtled down to the assault, reaching their objective simultaneously. Spot fell writhing back in a litter of white entrails, and Plain, entering the anthracite stove by way of the mica window, caused the room to be filled with a nauseous odour. The third light deemed the moment propitious and went out.

By the light of wax vestas Thompson struck at the red ball with a hammer.

'I was afraid so,' he said. 'I must have dropped some of that Jamais cement on spot. Hold the cloth down while I have another smack at it.'

G. S.

Under the new railway grouping scheme the identity of the S.E. & C.R. has disappeared. This is a sad blow to the professional humorist who is, however, grateful that the Ford car still remains outside the scheme. (10.1.23.)

PILMONINE

Why are certain firms so unenterprising in their choice of names for the things they manufacture? Where some producers insist on selling 'Klipiton' collar-studs or 'Kumphy' arm-chairs—names that

Pilmonine

are difficult to forget, even with considerable effort—others aim at no such expressive nomenclature. They are content to invent a good sounding title for their goods, and if it happens to be rather like a title invented by someone else—well, it can't be helped. Thermophine, Sanatolene, Phosticine—you know them all, and you know how confusing they are. But if they are confusing to us who usually want only one at a time, how much more confusing they must be to the men in the shops who have to stock a whole lot of them at once and remember all the differences.

When you go into a shop and ask suddenly for a tin of Sincarnite, haven't you noticed a worried look on the face of the dealer? He is probably trying to remember whether you are asking for bath-salts or cough-cure or weed-killer.

If the truth were known the shop people *don't* remember the differences. I discovered that this morning. And this is how I did it.

I invented the word 'Pilmonine' and tried it on my chemist.

'I should be glad', I said, 'if you will send me up a bottle of Pilmonine.'

His eyelid never quivered. 'Certainly, Sir,' he said, and booked the order.

No difficulty, you see. So I went on to the grocer.

I asked him for two packets of Pilmonine.

'I don't think we have any in stock,' he said, peering and bending beneath the counter. But he promised to order some for me; and, not to be outdone in politeness, I promised to call for it in a few days' time.

The man at the Italian warehouse, after considerable search, announced that he had 'run out'. But when I looked he was still there, and so I could only conclude that he was as great a liar as I was. He took my order, being, I think, under the impression that Pilmonine was a species of distemper.

So I went from shop to shop, ordering my Pilmonine. Four pounds here, two canisters there, a dozen yards from the draper, eight drums from the fruiterer (who thought it was the correct name for preserved figs in the land where figs came from).

In a final burst of bravado I visited the coal merchants.

Pilmonine

'Will you deliver six tons of Pilmonine to this address?' I asked modestly, handing them my card.

'Pilmonine, Sir?'

It was my first check. But I was firm.

'Yes, Pilmonine,' I said irritably, with the air of one whose time is money.

The clerk turned and fiddled about with a lot of catalogues.

'What exactly is Pilmonine?' he asked at last.

'Oh, it's a kind of anthracite,' I explained condescendingly, and added, 'I want it delivered as soon as possible'.

'Very good, Sir,' said the man meekly.

Then I went home to lunch. It had been a good morning. I was particularly glad I had scored off the coal merchants, because they always overcharge so disgracefully.

All that happened this morning. This evening I have received the following letter from the coal people:

'Dear Sir,—*Re* your order of even date, we beg to state that a slight error was made. On inquiry we find that the fuel you require is not "Pilmonine", but "Pilmonite".'

The six tons will be delivered to-morrow afternoon.

Yours faithfully,

KING COAL COMPANY.'

F. A. R.

Forty-four per cent of the United States population are illiterate, says a New York newspaper. But even these figures do not account for the astounding circulation enjoyed by many American 'tabloid' periodicals. (31.1.23.)

THE PLAINT OF THE THIRD-CLASS PASSENGER

*The Pullman cars on the Brighton line
Are fair and stately, sedate and fine;*

The Plaint of the Third-Class Passenger

*Each 'First' bears proudly a lady's name,
But the 'Thirds' have none, which I call a shame.
Well suited to fur-clad super-men
Are 'Beatrice', 'Myrtle' and 'Vivienne';
But I entrain for the Southern shore
In 'Third-class Pullman-car, No. 4',
Which gives me rather a nasty jar,
For I hate to ride in a nameless car.
Not that I sigh for the gracious names
Of high-born damsels and noble dames,
But names like 'Susan' or 'Nell' or 'Kate'
Would well accord with my humble state,
And 'Nancy', 'Polly' and 'Mary Ann'
Ring sweet in the ear of a third-class man;
And I'd take my seat with a modest pride
In a car with a humble name outside.*

J. W. P.

The cuckoo is reported to have been heard already at Bath. It is suspected, however, that the bird was merely imitating a small boy imitating an early cuckoo. (14.3.23.)

THE CHINESE VASES

Honesty as the best policy was again being discussed.

'At any rate,' said my host, 'so far as comfort is concerned it has no equal. If you have a conscience, as I happen to have, you tell the truth in order to keep on terms with it. What it is like to have no conscience I am unable to say; I wish I knew. But with a conscience one is forced into rectitude on the principle of anything for a quiet life. I'll give you an example.

'Some years ago I went down to the country to stay with friends, and while I was there I was dragged to a bazaar. Bazaars are not in the least in my line, but I couldn't very well refuse to go with my hostess for a short time.

The Chinese Vases

'It was the usual thing. Hot women in large hats presiding at stalls; the vicar and his curates purring and superintending and interfering; the prettier girls offering button-holes at starvation prices and pinning them archly on you, or appealing to you to buy tickets in the raffle; retired Army men scowlingly searching the jumble counter for their favourite old clothes; a palmist here, a chirographist there, and occasionally an auction by a comic parish-ioner. If there are to be new roofs for vestries, such things must, I suppose, be; but they are a terrible form of necessity.

'I had done my best to find something to buy, but in vain. With the most generous of intentions it is sometimes impossible to bring oneself to part with money for articles that one dislikes too much, or is too much of a snob, too proud of one's own reputation for taste, to give away. And then suddenly I came to a stall of miscellaneous things—not jumble by any means, but cast-offs, superfluities—where there was a pair of Chinese Vases. I was a collector of porcelain in a small way, and I guessed these to be good, although I had not knowledge enough to be certain, and I asked the price.

'The owner of the stall—Lady Something-or-other, an elderly woman—told me she had had them for years and didn't like them. She had taken this opportunity of getting rid of them in a good cause. Would I give three pounds for the two?

'I said I would, and paid the money and bore them myself to the car. That they were worth more I was convinced, but I didn't know how much. I knew enough, however, to reopen the old debate that a scrupulously honest man carries on in his mind when he has taken advantage of a dealer's ignorance. Sophistry says that a dealer should know; it is his business to know; one cannot sell as well as buy; and think of the people he has probably swindled! Moreover in this case Lady So-and-so had named the price and I had paid it; there had been no haggling. None the less I knew in my heart of hearts that I had done the vestry roof out of a lot of tiles.

'Well, I brought the vases back to London and had them valued, and, as I was offered two hundred pounds for them by the expert, I knew they must be worth double that sum. But still I did nothing. I set them up in my rooms and received many congratulations on

The Chinese Vases

having acquired such beautiful specimens; but I got no pleasure out of it. I was not on the right terms with myself.

'Gradually I began to lose sleep. I would wake in the night and hear the vases conversing, lamenting with each other, not, as they might well have done, that their new owner was so lacking in the finer shades of honour, but that two such distinguished vessels should have fetched so little. It touched their Oriental pride. However, I could do all my own regretfulness on my head, and did so; and, loss of sleep being a misfortune that no one can bear with equanimity, I took action.

'I wrote to Lady So-and-so, reminding her of the bazaar and my purchase and telling her that it had come to my knowledge (as though it were yesterday—for no one is honest in every particular!) that the vases were of greater value than either she or I had any idea of, and that I thought it only fair that they should be returned to her as she had parted with them under a misapprehension. I then had the vases packed with the utmost care and despatched them to her with this magnanimous epistle.

'In due course I had a letter thanking me for my chivalrous conduct and saying that she had sold the vases to a London dealer for two hundred and eighty guineas.

'There,' he concluded, 'that's my story. Was honesty the best policy? As a luller of conscience, yes. Otherwise I don't see why I shouldn't have had that money to play with as well as she.'

'But of course she gave you a share of it?' I asked.

'Not a penny.'

'She didn't give you any souvenir of the affair? A box of cigars? A cigarette-case?'

'No,' he said. 'But I didn't mind that. What I did mind—and what still rankles—is that she never even returned my original three pounds.'

E. V. L.

Professor Einstein's new theory cannot, he says, be explained in words. In this respect it is a great improvement on the old one. (12.5.23.)

The Third Bathe

THE THIRD BATHE

I shall bathe again. I do not care what they say. Nothing shall stop me. I shall bathe again. I shall proceed down the shore, gently flapping my gown, and wallow and float and swim under a blue sky in water which is unruffled, glittering with sunshine, and not cold but cool. In water also which is just conveniently deep. I shall not have very long to live afterwards, I suppose, if all they tell me is true, and I should like to take the opportunity of saying farewell to anyone who may happen to read this article. About to bathe, I salute him. He may have my white mouse and the bound volume of *Chatterbox*. In a very few moments now. . . .

Whenever the force of circumstances compels me to leave my home during the month of August, and the place to which I am to be taken has after long argument been decided, I always ask first, 'Is there sea there?'

Some people regard the sea historically, commercially or poetically. I prefer to look at it as one of the triumphs of municipal progress, like paving or gas. If I am told that the sea *is* there, I say, 'How splendid! Then we shall be able to bathe'.

But why I say 'How splendid!' I really do not know, for nothing can be more unsatisfactory than the state of British bathing at the present time. Nearly all the savageries of nature and the restrictive regulations of mankind have been enlisted to make it so. Only philosophy, a philosophy that does not fear death, a philosophy like mine, can conquer them.

Theoretically the number of days on which it is possible to bathe off the British coast is three hundred and sixty-five. At no period of the year is any portion of the British coast ice-bound or dangerously infested with sharks. Practically, however, the number of days is about twenty-three. Obviously it becomes a matter of the flimsiest chance whether any of those twenty-three days coincide with any of the days on which the Briton has dealings with the sea.

But the trouble is not ended here.

There is a very detestable type of man who insists on bathing in the early morning before breakfast. He suborns accomplices, and goes out to find the sea grey, ruffled and inhospitable, having

The Third Bathe

obviously passed a bad night. It is agitated. It is heaving. There are white horses upon it. It is in a kind of condition when it wants breasting. You cannot fool about in it, you cannot wallow, you cannot float. Nothing but breasting will do. You get into it and find that it is even worse than it looks, and tastes worse still. Without professing to be a *gourmet*, I may say that I have rolled round my tongue a fairly considerable number of brands of the British sea. There is the light and heady Atlantic; the glutinous yet stimulating tippie of Scarborough and Skegness; but for real body commend me to the little-known chalk vintage of Rottingdean. There is a strong gritty flavour about the kind here. . . . But I digress.

When one has tasted and breasted for five minutes of deep suffering, one gets out and returns. They may be those—in fact I feel sure there are those—whose characters are fortified by sorrow. They are the people for whose sake bathing before breakfast in the sea was given to us. They come purged, as it were, out of great tribulation and find that life has a newer and fuller meaning for them. They are more tolerant and kindly towards their fellowmen. I am not like that. I simply get a chill on the liver. Always after an experience like this I decide that the time for bathing, so far as I am concerned, is not before breakfast; and those who have breakfasted with me invariably agree.

I have bathed before breakfast to-day.

The obvious time for bathing is much later, when the universe has become a little warmer and the chill more or less has been taken off the sea. I say more or less because the sea has never really been anything but chilly, ever. One should bathe, for example, about noon. But when you look out of the window you find that the sea has gone about half-way across to France or America, as the case may be. In my case it was France. One cannot help looking a fool as one pursues a reluctant sea half-way to France at about eleven-thirty in the forenoon merely in order to wet oneself all over without lying down. The white cliffs of Kent become a mere far-away glimmer. Anybody would suppose that one was going to settle the Ruhr problem off one's own bat. What I have never been able to discover is whether the fellows who swim the Channel are obliged

The Third Bathe

to keep their feet off the ground all the way, or whether that counts as a foul. In wading one thinks of many things of that sort in the intervals between the sharper pebbles. I suppose that will be Dieppe over there. . . .

I bathed at eleven-thirty this morning.

When I returned to the British coast I found a man standing beside a boat. He was ruminating and seemed to be a man versed in the ways of the sea.

'I want you to tell me,' I said to him, 'what time to-day the sea will be just up to here?' And I indicated with my forefinger a spot where the beach rose up sharply like the end of a bath.

'It will be high tide,' he began.

'I don't want to know anything about tides,' I said to him gently. 'I'm not a mariner. I'm not even a Younger Brother of Trinity House. I only want to know when the sea will be just up to here.' And I indicated the required spot again.

'Bout har-par-five,' he said.

I went home and had a very large lunch. After that I went to sleep. When I woke up I ate a very large tea. Then I looked out of the window, and sure enough the man was right. The sea had come right up to the deep end of the shore. In about half an hour there would be enough of it for a thorough bath. The surface of the water was calm and bright, the sky was radiantly blue.

I immediately announced my momentous decision.

'I shall bathe,' I said, 'again.'

There was a febrile chorus of protest.

'You can't possibly bathe again,' they said. 'You've bathed twice already.'

'You can't possibly bathe now,' they said. 'You've just had a heavy meal.'

'Hearty,' I said, 'not heavy.'

'It's really very dangerous,' said my sister. 'I heard of a man who bathed three times and got cramp and died.'

'I heard of a man,' I rejoined, 'who refused to bathe more than once, and he was bitten by a jelly-fish that time, and caught scarlatina.'

The Third Bathe

'You'll be horribly tired when you come out,' said my brother-in-law. 'You'd much better wait till to-morrow and go in before breakfast.'

'I'm going to bathe once before breakfast to-morrow,' I said, 'and I'm going to do it now.'

'Any doctor would forbid you,' said my sister. 'You'd much better bathe at midday to-morrow.'

'Never at midday again,' I said. 'My French isn't good enough. I have a short article to write, and then I shall bathe.'

And bathe I shall.

E. V. K. (*Evøe*)

FRENCH MASTERING

'French, too? Excellent?' he said, and booked me on the spot.

This was good. If I had become a schoolmaster again—and now that the axe had got me in the neck I couldn't see how I could very well be anything else—I would rather go to Mr. Harley's jolly little prep school at Sandsbourne, overlooking the sea and the fourteenth green of Sandsbourne Golf Club, than anywhere.

So I was glad. I did not much want to be a French master; I was not a typical French master; but I was to teach Latin and history and arithmetic and divinity and English and cricket as well, so I did not mind a little French. And in a way I rather liked the language. I had got quite keen on it during the War, and my accent and vocabulary had come on enormously. Not that I learnt all my French in the War. I had the grammar side of it sized up long before. Genders and plurals and negatives come easily to me; and I know exactly where to put things like *y* and *en* every time. There is only one flaw in my French, and that is that when I am addressed in that language by a Frenchman I cannot follow further than the first few words of his remarks. It is strange, but it has always been so with me. I can converse freely with any Frenchman until he begins to talk; when he does I am lost. But that, of course, would not matter at Sandsbourne.

French Mastering

It was a glorious afternoon in early May.

'About French,' said Mr. Harley. 'I am splitting the school into two parts. I will take the two top forms, and you the other three. There will be about thirty boys in your class, so you'd better take them in my room, the big schoolroom. And I want you to do nothing but conversation. No grammar or anything. Just talk French the whole hour. It's much the best way, I think; don't you?'

'Yes, rather,' I replied; 'I'm sure it is.' And I repaired to the big schoolroom.

Things opened peacefully enough.

'Quelle heure est-il?' I asked Simpson.

'Trois heures cinq,' he replied correctly.

'Jones,' I said, 'quel âge avez-vous?' And so on.

I came to a boy named Casergues.

'Aimez-vous jouer au cricket?' I asked him.

'Moi,' he replied—'J'nai jamaisbijoucaillouchou genouhiboujou-joupou,' or words to that effect.

'Ah,' I said, 'vous parlez français bien, Casergues.'

'Oui, j'suis français j'suis tarrara-boombdi avecrème dementhe, honisoit-qui marronglacé.'

'C'est bien,' I answered, 'mais pas si vite, mon brave. On ne comprend pas—les autres, vous savez.'

Casergues smiled brightly. He was a jolly little boy, but I could not help wishing he were in a French school learning to speak English.

A few minutes later, when things were rollicking merrily along, the door opened and the headmaster walked in.

'Pardon, monsieur,' he said, approaching my desk with a bunch of keys, 'je veux chercher quelquechose.'

'N'y a pas de quoi, monsieur,' I replied courteously, and he dived down to a drawer by my feet.

I looked round the room. There was a profound silence. Not a sound could be heard but the jingle of keys and the click of a lock. Every eye was on the headmaster. I was dumb; we were all dumb; we might not have been having a French lesson at all.

A thousand thoughts surged into my brain. The sun, the sea, my happy home, my father tending his roses, my sister the tennis

French Mastering

lawn—was there a tennis-party to-day?—and still the headmaster was fumbling at the drawer. I must collect myself. I must speak. I must say something in French. I must think of something in English and say it in French. What, though? Heavens—anything My sister—my pen . . . I cleared my throat.

'Et, Mitchell,' I said unsteadily, 'avez-vous la plume de votre sœur?'

'Non, monsieur,' he replied promptly.

So that settled that. Very quickly—too quickly. But the idea was good; I must develop it.

'Er,' I said—'then—alors, ou est-il—er—elle?'

Mitchell thought for a moment.

'Ma sœur,' he inquired, 'or la plume?'

'La plume, of c—naturellement,' I told him.

'Ma sœur a le,' he answered.

His sister had it. Of course she had. But what shocking French.

'Non non,' I corrected him, 'on dit—ma sœur l'a' . . . Whoa, how horrible! The headmaster dropped his keys with a bang. I gripped my chair and cleared my throat again.

'On dit, vous savez, ma sœur a la plume.' Help! 'Elle est—la plume, that is—elle est chez ma sœur.'

Casergues chipped in.

'Si la sœur d'Missshell,' I caught, and was lost. It was a long sentence, sparkling with wit (I imagined) and winding up on a note of interrogation. Casergues laughed heartily. The headmaster looked up and laughed too. So did I, desperately.

'Oui,' I murmured, 'c'est ça.'

The headmaster pocketed his keys and departed as I was saying 'Et alors, Jenkins, dites moi s'il vous plait, dites moi'

'Come in,' called Mr. Harley an hour later.

'It's this, Sir . . . ' I began.

'Oh, it doesn't matter a bit,' he interrupted. 'I'll lump the whole lot together for French and take them all myself. Let's go and have a few holes of golf.'

I am all for Mr. Harley. We are going to get on splendidly together.

L. B. G.

Embroidery

EMBROIDERY

A week or so ago it was rumoured in Press circles that the famous Society beauty, Lady Acton-Buzzard, had been awake all night with a bad attack of indigestion, the result of over-indulgence in chocolates the previous evening. The rumour turned out later to be false but meanwhile several journalists had written up the item for their papers. Their compositions never appeared in the Press, but our representative was fortunate enough to secure the proof-sheets before they were destroyed, and these are reproduced below.

The Times had prepared a leading article on the subject, reading in part as follows:

DOLOUR AND DISTINCTION

The announcement to-day that Lady Acton-Buzzard has been deprived of sleep for a whole night by a severe attack of pain, as the result of some internal affliction, suggests a few reflections on the connection throughout history between physical affections and noblesse. We need scarcely remind the British public of the fate of King Henry I, whose early demise was the regrettable result of partaking of an immoderate quantity of some kind of fish. Another Henry, eighth of the name, suffered during the greater part of his life, if some historians are to be believed, from an excess of adipose deposit which sapped his vitality and undermined his heath; and a host of other examples will occur to the mind of the philosopher who retains his belief in the Roman maxim, *Ne quid nimis*. May it be, perhaps, that such physical ailments are sent by Providence to try the fortitude of the great, and to remind them of the poet's warning, *Nihil est ab omni parte beatum*? If this be so, our captains of industry may find therein a grain of comfort for the annual recurrence of their season of gout, and politicians in the grip of catarrh console themselves with the thought of fame for their affliction.

The *Daily Express* had reserved part of a column on the front page for this item:

Embroidery

GROSVENOR SQUARE HORROR SOCIETY BEAUTY'S INSOMNIA SENSATION

'I Cannot Sleep!'

Occupants of the stately mansions of Grosvenor Square were disturbed yesterday morning by piercing shrieks issuing from the residence of the famous Society beauty, Lady Acton-Buzzard. Three of the neighbours forced the door and rushed into the house, to find the unfortunate lady tossing restlessly in bed, groaning and repeating endlessly, 'I cannot sleep! I cannot sleep!' On inquiry it was found that the previous evening she had eaten a large quantity of chocolates, which had caused a bad attack of indigestion.

DREADFUL AGONY

'She has suffered dreadful agony,' said her mother, the Hon. Mrs. Huggleton-Thorpe; 'ever since she was a child she has suffered from this complaint.'

Towards noon Lady Acton-Buzzard dropped off into a doze and was later reported to be much better.

The *Daily Herald* had reserved space for a short notice on the back page:

CAPITALIST GREED

TITLED 'LADY'S' EXTRAVAGANCE BRINGS ITS OWN PUNISHMENT

Another instance of the selfishness and indifference of the ruling classes to the misery now rife among the workers was brought to light yesterday at the town residence of one of Society's aristocrats Lady Acton-Buzzard.

On Monday evening she had had delivered to the house four pounds of expensive chocolates, which she was greedy enough to consume in a single evening after dinner. Reproved by her housekeeper, who told her that she ought to be ashamed of herself for wasting on such trifles a sum that might have kept a working-man's family for a week, she retaliated by giving the faithful old retainer a month's notice. The case had been reported to the executive of

Embroidery

the Domestic Servants' Union, and a general strike has been called for Saturday, as a protest.

Workers will be glad to hear that her callousness brought its own retribution, as Lady Acton-Buzzard spent a sleepless night suffering from a well-merited attack of indigestion.

The *Daily Mail* was to have reported the occurrence on the central page:

ANOTHER £1,000 CLAIM?

GASTRITIS AFTER EATING CHOCOLATES

Another reader has a good prospect of benefiting by The *Daily Mail* free insurance scheme. She is:

LADY ACTON-BUZZARD, 244 *Grosvenor Square, W.*

Taken ill with a severe attack of gastritis after eating a few chocolates, Lady Acton-Buzzard became rapidly worse. A doctor was sent for, who pronounced her unfit to attend any balls or other social functions for at least a week. No improvement so far has been announced in her condition, and in the deplorable event of the attack proving fatal the *Daily Mail* will have great pleasure in promptly handing to her ladyship's executors the usual CHEQUE FOR £1,000.

QUALIFY FOR 'DAILY MAIL' BENEFITS
BY INSURING TO-DAY!!!

The *Daily Sketch* had intended to insert a paragraph in its 'Society Gossip' column:

I hear that poor Lady Acton-Buzzard was awake all night on Monday with a bad attack of indigestion. When last I saw her I noticed that she was looking a little frail. By the way, her new Pom is said to be one of the coming wonders of the next Show.

Lady Acton-Buzzard, who was 27 last week, is the eldest daughter of the Hon. Mrs. Huggleton-Thorpe, and wife of Sir Kenneth Acton-Buzzard, Bart. She divorced her first husband, Sir Slocombe Salop, in 1916, and Lord Pinwherry, her second, obtained a decree against her two years later. She is now happily married and famous for her charm. (Picture on back page.)

Embroidery

Among evening newspapers the *Pall Mall Gazette* reporter wrote:

PLOT TO MURDER BARONET'S WIFE?
LADY ACTON-BUZZARD ILL AFTER EATING
CHOCOLATES

POLICE POISON THEORY

The machinations of another secret Bolshevist Society in London are disclosed by the recent illness of Lady Acton-Buzzard, wife of Sir Kenneth Acton-Buzzard, Bart., a distinguished member of one of the oldest English families.

It would appear that, after dismissing the housekeeper on Monday evening for her insolent behaviour, Lady Acton-Buzzard partook of some chocolates before retiring to rest. During the night she was awakened by severe internal pains, which made sleep impossible, and a doctor had to be called at daybreak. The *Pall Mall Gazette* understands that the doctor's examination showed that the chocolates were poisoned, probably by the housekeeper, in retaliation for her dismissal. The woman in question is believed to have been in communication with a Bolshevist Secret Society, known as the 'Red Braces', which is established in London for the purpose of assassinating distinguished people. Several arrests are expected.

Our readers will be relieved to hear that a far-flung menace to the aristocracy of this great country has been happily averted by the prompt action of the police.

A. L. P.

There is some talk of extending the American coastal three-mile limit to twelve miles. The present area has become so congested with revenue ships that the rum fleet cannot move about with comfort. (1.8.23.)

The famous Derby winner, Papyrus, was accorded a great welcome in America upon his arrival from these shores. This is probably due to the fact that he wouldn't give lectures. (10.11.23.)

The Two Lords of the Lost Island

THE TWO LORDS OF THE LOST ISLAND

'Wasn't there once a country called Britain?' inquired the intelligent young Eskimo of his grandfather, 'in the year 1993.'

'There was,' replied the old man. 'It was a thickly populated island in the Atlantic ocean.'

'Then what happened to it, Grandpa?' asked the boy. 'I can't find any trace of it in my atlas. Did it disappear in an earthquake?'

'Not exactly an earthquake, but something quite as bad. It is a sad story. Would you like to hear it?'

'Please,' said the boy, nestling against his grandfather's knee.

'Well,' began the old man, 'in the year 1914 Britain got mixed up with a big war, which lasted for some time and unsettled everything frightfully. Then peace was made, but not very cleverly. In fact it was almost as bad being mixed up with the peace as with the war. The British were very puzzled to know what to do for the best.'

'Couldn't their leaders tell them?'

'Their leaders! My boy, there were two men, and two men only, who saw clearly what ought to be done, and they were not official leaders.'

'Why not?'

'Oh, I don't know.'

'Didn't they tell the people?'

'I should think they did. Not by word of mouth, for they never spoke in their own House of Parliament, but by writing. They owned newspapers—lots—and in these newspapers they kept on telling the official leaders and the people what ought to be done.'

'Who were they?'

'Two lords, named Beavermere and Rotherbrook.'

'What funny names! And did they say the same thing?'

'No. One of them said that the British ought to be very, very hard on the Germans—the people they had fought and beaten in the war—and the other said it would be wise to give the Germans a chance. Again, one of them said that the British must on no account let any tax be put upon food that came into the country, and the other said that such a tax would do no harm to speak of.'

'But I thought you said they both saw clearly.'

The Two Lords of the Lost Island

'So they did, but in different ways.'

'Didn't it make it very awkward for the British to have one great lord telling them to do one thing, and the other telling them to do the opposite?'

'On the contrary it was very good for the British. It kept them on an even keel, as sailors say. As long as one of the great lords opposed the other, the balance of the country was maintained. They counteracted each other.'

'I think I see, Grandpa. What happened next?'

'Well, the Germany business and the tax squabble blew over, as these things always do. After a few years new questions cropped up. There was a dispute about something between Britain and Patagonia, and there was a sharp argument over a proposal to give the Parliamentary vote to girls of fourteen and upwards.'

'And did the two lords see clearly again?'

'Yes, quite clearly.'

'Opposite ways?'

'No, the same way. That was where the trouble began.'

'I should have thought—— How did the trouble begin?'

'You remember what I said about the balance of the country? Well, one day these two lords, in all their newspapers, simultaneously delivered their judgments on the questions of Patagonia and Votes for Girls. People went to bed overnight as usual, not expecting anything out of the ordinary to happen; until eight o'clock in the morning it was quite a normal country.'

'Eight o'clock?'

'Yes; that, roughly, was the hour at which all the two lords' newspapers got to the people's breakfast-table. It was then discovered that the judgments of the two lords were unanimous. They thought the same way. That was too much for Britain. As long as the two lords thought opposite ways the country was safe. But the combined weight of their identical opinions, both pressing Britain in the same direction, did it.'

'Did what?'

'Pushed Britain off its balance——made it lopsided——turned it upside down.'

The Two Lords of the Lost Island

'You don't mean . . . ?'

'At twenty-five minutes past eight, the island gave one great heave, rose out of the water, turned clean over, sank and was never seen again! That was the end of Britain. It was a pity.'

W. H. G.

'What is the origin of the name Mah-Jongg?' asks a headline. We believe it is derived from the Chinese 'Mah-Jongg', which means 'Mah-Jongg'. (9.1.24.)

THE BOTTLE'S PROGRESS

There are some stories that can be adequately told only by the cinema, and this is one of them. But, as Mr. Punch does not yet give away a moving-picture camera with every copy (as no doubt he will be expected to do in the course of time), the artist and I must do the best we can to take its place.

All adventurous amateurs of London, and especially the young, have a period in their lives when there is no excitement equal to the discovery of a new and remarkable Soho restaurant. It may be French, it may be Italian, and it is sometimes Spanish; but, whatever the alleged nationality, all are alike in being extraordinarily good and extraordinarily cheap, and 'For heaven's sake, old man, keep it to yourself, because if you tell everyone the place will be ruined!'

Another peculiarity which most of them have, and which is not perhaps an advantage, is the absence of a licence, so that all wine has to be fetched from a neighbouring shop or public-house.

It was in one of these restaurants (the name of which I would not give away under any consideration) that I was sitting at lunch recently when two young men entered and took a neighbouring table. Mine was by the window, commanding the street; theirs was farther in.

I had no need to strain my ears to learn that the host was of the

The Bottle's Progress

centre, and the guest a beginner in Bohemia. They had probably been at school together, and this was a reunion after a long interval, and the host was showing off both London and his own intimate London knowledge, as well as his general man-of-the-worldliness.

Having ordered the food they came to the question of the wine.

'You like Burgundy?' the host asked.

Yes, he liked Burgundy.

'You always get good Burgundy in Soho,' said the host. 'We'll have a bottle. Warms you.'

He chose a brand and paid for it—for that, as you know, is the rule in these places—and a young waiter in old evening clothes was sent off to get it.

'Be careful with it,' the host called out. 'A mistake to shake Burgundy,' he explained to his friend.

'Is it? Yes, of course,' said the friend, and they settled down to confidential talk, which I neither heard nor wanted to hear.

It was then that the cinema operator should have begun to turn his handle, for this, as I could see through the window, is what occurred.

The young waiter entered the public-house at the corner, and, after an interval long enough for his own refreshment, emerged with the bottle, swinging it casually in one hand.

At this moment he met a friend, also a waiter, from another marvellous little restaurant, who was on the same errand, and the friend took an interest in the bottle and wanted to examine it. His curiosity was defeated by the young waiter holding the bottle upside down behind his back, changing it swiftly from hand to hand as the other sought to get a glimpse of the prize.

Finally the two men parted, and, as they did so, the second of them gave the first a friendly blow and ran away, and our waiter pursued, brandishing the bottle on high like a club.

The chase ended at the public-house door, when our waiter again turned towards home, again swinging the bottle.

He was nearly home when still another waiter, bent also on the same errand and obviously in a great hurry—probably the result of

The Bottle's Progress

a heavy tip—arrived and, glancing at the bottle and seeing that it was the same brand that he too had been sent for, asked to be allowed to have it. I could not, of course, hear, but they both came of gesticulating parents and the conversation was as plain as if spoken to me. 'I'm in a hurry and you're not,' his hands distinctly said. 'Here's the money; you go and get another while I run with this.'

Our waiter, however, very properly refused to relinquish the bottle, whereupon the other seized it, and a terrific battle for its possession set in, which, with a terrific wrench, our waiter won. He then, dishevelled and hot, slipped into the restaurant and disappeared behind the *caisse*, which is just by the door, unobserved by the customers who had despatched him and who, I thought, were long-suffering to a fault. Behind the *caisse* the bottle was uncorked and otherwise dealt with.

When it emerged again it was lying on its side in a little wicker cradle and the waiter brought it to the table on tip-toe as reverently as any new-born babe. . . .

The host sipped the wine critically. 'Excellent!' he said. 'Perfect condition.'

E. V. L.

Men who suffer from indigestion are to have a club of their own in New York. This will be good news for the others. (23.1.24.)

UNSKILLED LABOUR

When the accident happened the doctor was called

And hastened at once to my side;

To the cure of a body deplorably mauled

The tenderest care he applied;

And the value he set on his masterly skill

Was duly proclaimed in the size of his bill.

And long ere my full restoration took place

The lawyer had loomed into view

Unskilled Labour

*To take my instructions for starting a case
To win me the damages due;
The statement he rendered was also a sign
That a labour of love wasn't much in his line.*

*In short, when the profits were split into three
That came from this painful affair,
I found that the portion allotted to me
Was only a junior share;
Rewarding my partners' professional toil
Demanded some eighty per cent of the spoil.*

*But I cannot deny this division was right;
'Twere churlish indeed to complain;
For the work that I did was admittedly slight
And needed no wonderful brain;
My labour was small (though essential, no doubt);
I was only the fellow the car flattened out.*

T. H.

A ten-round contest in America ended in a fight between a heavyweight boxer and a referee. We still hope to hear of a contest in which a heavyweight boxer fights a heavyweight boxer. (12.3.24.)

HELP!

Insular prejudice throughout this England of ours has been responsible for many a thoughtless libel against the foreigner. But of all the calumnies that have ever been uttered none is more cruel than that which charges the Italian railway official with being unhelpful. Like ourselves, he is probably only human. He may occasionally forget where he left the key of his booking-office or where he put the particular brand of ticket you happen to fancy. He may have to work out his calculations with a bit of chalk on the nearest wall. He may even forget to give you your correct change. But of all

Help!

railway officials in Europe it is doubtful whether any come forward more willingly, more determinedly or in such numbers to assist the foreigner to his train.

It was my good fortune, not long since, to experience some of this helpfulness in Milan station. And if any of the good Milanese who left their all to follow my fortunes on that occasion were unable to remain with me until I eventually succeeded in obtaining my ticket I take this opportunity of thanking them for what they tried to do, or wanted to try to do, or narrowly failed of completing.

My original intention, on entering the station, had been to avoid anything in the nature of undue ostentation; to discover the correct booking-office by stealth, and blush to find myself in the right train.

But the warm-hearted staff wouldn't hear of it. No sooner had I set foot in the booking-hall than my two suitcases, my handbag, my rug and my umbrella became the objective of a powerful baggage column. The organization was wonderful. There was no overlapping to speak of, very little shouting and practically nothing in the nature of open riot. Not a drop of blood was spilt. And although at the end of ten seconds I began to experience some difficulty in distinguishing between those who were helping me, those who were helping the men who were helping me and those who *had* helped or *wanted* to help or were *waiting* to help me, I am ready to admit that this little weakness in the organization might easily have been overcome in about ten minutes by the simple provision of auxiliary helpers—men whose sole duty would consist in helping me to distinguish clearly between helpers engaged in helping legitimate helpers, and helpers who, in the din, might conceivably be tempted to help themselves.

An interpreter took the first real step towards aiding me in my quest for a ticket. At the moment of my entrance he was busy leaning against the angle formed by another interpreter and a wall. But he jumped to his feet, fought his way to my side, ascertained where I wanted to go, placed me at the end of a long booking queue, pocketed his tip, touched his cap and vanished—all in the twinkling of an eye. I have never seen a smarter piece of work, unless it was that of the friendly porter who immediately afterwards pulled me

Help!

out of the queue again. Through the mixed medium of gesture and broken English, this man and his supporters explained to me that I was in the wrong queue altogether. Nor would they leave me until I had accompanied them to a distant booking-office, which bore all the appearance of never having been opened since it was built.

'Stop here,' they commanded, again in the language of gesture 'while we exert our influence with the authorities. Only thus can you ever hope to secure the particular variety of ticket upon which you appear to have set your heart.'

They returned five minutes later, driving a tame official before them.

'What luck?' I inquired, advancing to meet them.

With a fatherly smile the official brandished the very ticket which I had ordered! Gladly and promiscuously I tipped, paid my fare, received my ticket—which bore a striking resemblance to a music-hall programme—and fell into step at the rear of the column that was helping me with my two suitcases, my handbag, my rug and my umbrella.

At the barrier a halt was called, word was passed back and I moved up to the head of the line.

'Your ticket,' shouted the inspector, or Italian idioms to that effect; and with a flourish of triumph I swung the thing before his startled gaze.

For a moment the man looked incredulous. Then, snatching the document, he gazed at it for a while before raising his eyes to fix me reproachfully. As plainly as if he had spoken I read his thoughts. 'Why didn't you let *me* get this for you?' he said, with his shoulders, his eyebrows and his moustache.

But his anger passed. The irresistible instinct of the Italian railway official rose uppermost in his being and he prepared to help me. My train was due out in about three minutes, a fact that might easily have been seized upon as an excuse for withholding any further assistance. But no; instead, producing a pair of iron-rimmed spectacles, the inspector put them on, adjusted them, turned to paragraph three on page five of my ticket, and read the passage out, word for word, in the divine language of Dante. A lump rose to my

Help!

throat; a mist came before my eyes. I wanted to shake the inspector by the hand. I felt that I ought to ask after his family. An almost overwhelming desire seized me to tell him that, if only the departure of my train could be delayed for an hour or so, nothing would please me more than to go through the whole ticket with him, chapter by chapter. My total ignorance of Italian, however, combined with the uproar occasioned by such of my following as had broken rank to elaborate on what the inspector had been reading, decided me to bow gracefully, recover my ticket with a snatch, and shove my way on to the platform.

From the window of my carriage I assisted at the vociferous demobilization of the baggage column. And as they straggled back in the direction of the booking-hall I watched my late helpers help one another to count the lira notes with which I had sprinkled them.

E. J. E.

The baby girl recently born in a Bakerloo train has been christened Thelma Ursula Beatrice Eleanor. Being born in a tube isn't the fun some people seem to think. (9.7.24.)

MELODIC DRESS

(*In an account of a recent Society gathering a well-known lady was described as wearing 'a symphony in black and white'.*)

The wedding of the popular Society favourite, Miss Val Cury, was celebrated yesterday amid a galaxy of wealth and fashion. The bride, who was very pale, wore a charming little *rondino*, the principle theme of which, carried out in white satin, was varied very delightfully by episodes in ninon and silver tissue. A veil of old Limerick lace and orange-blossoms struck an original note in the introductory bars, while silver shoes, reminiscent of the second episode, formed a pleasing *coda* to the whole.

The bridesmaids were dressed in *vivace* little *scherzi* of pale-blue taffeta, with trios of silver lace which recalled the episodic matter of the bride's gown. Draped on the hip *cadenza* fashion, the skirts

Melodic Dress

hung in *rubato* folds falling *diminuendo* to a point, and were balanced by the counterpoint of the *under-scherzi*. The principal theme was repeated in the same key in the hats, with a transitory modulation into a wreath of pink roses round the crown, which was developed *largamente* in the bouquets.

Lady Cury, the bride's mother, was magnificent in a cerise velvet grand opera, the somewhat florid passages of which were relieved by a recitative in black satin.

An original costume was the symphonic *fantasia* of Miss Alegra Covent. The principal subject was brilliant scarlet crepe marocain, with daring purple passages at irregular intervals carried out in bugles. A pink net over-tunic with polychromatic bead trimming created a somewhat dissonant effect, the harshness of which was, however, modified by the exquisite *timbre* of the brass bandeau which she wore on her head in place of a hat.

The Hon. Mrs. Saxe-Horne wore a fascinating draped overture in green satin *beauté*. Opening with a *legato* movement across the shoulders that was at once taken up by the strings of the hat, it developed in a few bars into the swinging melody of the corsage itself, which in turn was arrested by a striking contrapuntal passage of yellow and white to emphasize the waist-line. The brilliant scoring of the corsage was repeated again at the top of the skirt and treated with the same richness of colour, only to be caught up after a few phrases by a semi-quaver *allegro* movement of *diamenté* roses. The *motif* reappeared in a line of shrill yellow piping.

Lady Cecilia Psackbut struck a somewhat severe note in a dark grey silk *fugue* in B flat minor; while the Countess of Beckwood, in a purple *oratorio* with an *adagio* passage of ivory satin round the waist, presented a striking appearance. Her daughter, Lady Viola, looked delightful in a simple little white muslin *cantata*.

The presents were both *numerosi e costosi*.

A. B. C.

An American visitor says that London telephones are far more distinct than those of New York. We suspect him of talking with his gum in his cheek. (16.7.24.)

A Press Colourman

A PRESS COLOURMAN

The reporter from the *Daily Wire* came down the back garden between the washing-line and the gooseberry-bushes.

'You were in the motor-coach that collided with another at the foot of Vender Hill?'

The young man, who was mending a puncture in the back tyre of a bicycle, stood up to light a cigarette. 'That's right,' he said.

'You were among those who escaped with bruises?'

'That's right.'

'You actually saw the other coach burst into flames before it fell over the bridge into the river?'

'That's right.'

The reporter, who was young also and hopeful, produced a note-book. 'Could you give me your impressions of what occurred?'

Silence.

The reporter tried another leading question. 'You assisted in rescuing the survivors?'

'That's right.'

'It was towards five o'clock, wasn't it?'

'That's right,' replied the other, adding with a sudden burst of eloquence—'getting on for tea-time.'

The reporter closed his note-book. 'Thank you very much,' he said.

Extract from the *Daily Wire* of the following day:

THE VENDER HILL TRAGEDY

Vivid Description of the Scene by one of the Passengers on the Green Coach

'It was a glorious evening,' Mr. William Blow, an engine-fitter, of 32, Laburnum Villas, Balham, told our correspondent, 'and I was just admiring the glow of the setting sun across the peaceful valley of the Vender when the ill-fated blue coach appeared round the curve. I realized instantly that the driver had lost control. My heart seemed to miss a beat, but I kept cool, and so, I believe, did my fellow passengers. It was a tensely dramatic moment, as you may suppose, and I sincerely hope I shall never experience such another.'

A Press Colourman

With the crash I thought my last moment had come, but as a matter of fact I got off with a few bruises. I shall never forget seeing a pillar of fire going up from the other coach. It was a magnificent and awe-inspiring spectacle. Then another crash of falling masonry as the wall of the bridge gave way under the terrific impact, and the doomed vehicle fell down, down, down, into the sullen waters beneath.'

The next-door neighbour left his rabbits and came to speak to Mrs. Blow over the wall. 'I see your 'usband's given the *Daily Wire* a first-'end account.'

' 'E told 'em what 'e could,' said Mrs. Blow, 'but 'e says they've left out a good bit.' She raised her voice. 'They didn't put in all you said, did they, Bill?'

'That's right,' said Mr. Blow.

M. D.

SUBURBAN SCENES

THE YACHT RACE

Yacht-racing at Chisenham, I fancy, is a different thing from yacht-racing at Cowes—more difficult, more dangerous, more truly a test of the heroic virtues of the island race. I have only to mention the trifling circumstance that our races are conducted on a tidal river freely used by commercial traffic, scullers, pleasure-boats, tugs, steamers, ladies' eights and coxswainless fours.

Still, as far as we can, we regulate our races on the lines of Cowes; and we use of course the common laws of the Y.R.A., including the ridiculous provisions for handicapping and the start.

Handicapping is important in our races, for we have no one-class design. Indeed there are no two boats in the Chisenham fleet with the same dimensions, shape or sail-area. But we have sailing-dinghies of various sizes, some with red sails and some with white, and one or two with the end of an old sheet, and large decked cabin-cruisers, and swift half-raters built for racing, and lumbering vessels built for rowing, boats twenty feet in length and boats the size of my writing-table, and the *Flying Crab*, which is seven feet

Suburban Scenes

long and entirely circular in shape. In all the history of ships there never was a fleet so various as ours; and Mr. Tonkes gives me sixteen minutes. I give the *Flying Crab* six minutes. The course is three miles, up to the 'Green Man' and back, unless one stops for a beer.

Now in any sensibly conducted sport the competitor who receives a 'start' starts first, and the competitor who finishes first wins. Moreover, if the handicapping is well arranged, most of the competitors finish more or less together; there is the excitement of a contested finish, and the spectator can generally see, more or less, which man is winning. In yacht-racing it is quite otherwise. The yacht which finishes first seldom or never is the winner. And yacht A, which has half an hour's 'start', starts at the same time as yacht B, which is giving it half an hour's start, an arrangement which would only be possible in *Alice in Wonderland*, Bedlam or the rules of yacht-racing. The result is that yacht B finishes half an hour before yacht A, and yacht C half an hour later. Then they all sit down and do arithmetic. And the result is that the yacht which came in first is last, and the yacht which came in last wins. And solemn people write to *The Times* to say that they cannot understand why the common herd are not more interested in yacht-racing.

The august gentlemen who order these things will tell you, I expect, that this is the tradition and the only possible arrangement. Don't believe them. It is all nonsense.

But that is the way we race at Chisenham and Cowes. And the only thing to be said for it is that it provides a scene of delicious confusion and excitement at the start. For all the yachts not merely start together, but start in all directions.

Let me explain this fascinating ritual. Our own ritual (not very different from that at Cowes) is this: Five minutes before the race starts a gun is fired, the steward hoists the 'Blue Peter' to the very truck, or tip, of the club-mast, and after that a yacht is subject to the rules of the Y.R.A. and not allowed to row. The yachts are now 'jockeying for position', the object being to be near, but not over, the starting-line (which is an imaginary line between the club-mast and the 'Black Swan') when the starting-gun is fired. Five minutes

Suburban Scenes

later another gun is fired, the 'Blue Peter' is hauled down and away we go.

That is the theory of the thing. What happens in practice may be very different. When the first gun goes the expert, in theory, takes out his watch and notes the exact time, so as to be ready to the second for the starting-gun. What happens in practice is that one of the officers of the Club says loudly, 'Oy! Mr. Haddock! What about your entrance fee?' I sail dashing under the veranda, fling him a florin and foul my rudder on a mooring chain. When I am free of this I rejoin the other yachts and jockey for position, or, in other words, do what I can to avoid colliding with them. Generally, about this stage, Mr. Tonkes points out that I ought to have taken in a reef, or, if I have, that I don't need a reef on a day like this.

When we have jockeyed for position for some time and are anxiously referring to our watches, there usually approaches a vast, bulging and offensive motor-boat containing pleasure-seekers at a bob a head. Now it is a rule of the road that steam-ships and river-hogs must give way to sailing-vessels; more particularly should they give way when the sailing-vessel or yacht is evidently preparing to take part in the race for the Commodore's Cup. I therefore hold on my course, hoping against hope that the commander of the *Cheerio* is acquainted with this rule and will pass respectfully under my stern.

The commander of the *Cheerio* is never acquainted with this rule. On the contrary he too holds on his course. Nay, as often as not he adds insult to this injury by blowing at me with a filthy motor-horn. And at the last moment, since in the material sense I am in the weaker vessel and shall certainly be sunk if we collide, I am compelled, fuming, to 'go about'. At this point the Captain of the *Cheerio*, so far from apologizing, condoling or wishing me luck in the approaching contest, looks down from his disgusting motor-wheel, shakes his fat fist at me and in a voice vibrant with moral indignation addresses to me a rebuke so foul and vivid in its terms that it cannot here be reproduced. I give you only the gist.

'Oy!' says he, as one who reviles a dangerous motor-driver or human pest. 'You ought to be locked up, you ought!'

Suburban Scenes

'*What?*' say I, scarce able to speak for the injustice of this attack. 'You—you—you *toad!*' I finish feebly.

'You mind where you're going—see?' he yells, with a warning shake of the finger, while all his passengers grin their approval.

'Don't you know the rule of the road?' I say hopelessly, knowing too well that I might as well ask a mandrill if he has got religion.

'One river ain't big enough for you, I suppose?' is generally his cutting conclusion, or, 'Why can't you go *straight?*' and away he goes out of earshot, the righteous man, still genuinely believing that sailing-boats tack back and forth across a river, instead of going straight ahead, from sheer malignant cussedness.

A little shaken by this encounter, and possibly another of the same kind, I begin jockeying again. It is now but half a minute to the starting-gun and all our eyes are glued to our second-hands, while our vessels caper up and down and go about, and jibe and jib and narrowly escape collisions. Also we observe a tug approaching with six black barges trailing astern of her. Ten seconds—nine—eight—seven—six—I am in a superb position, well to windward and not far from the line—five—four—Mr. Tonkes is fifty yards away—three—two—one—*time!* I am six yards the right side of the line and now the gun should go.

Nothing happens.

Looking across the river I observe upon the balcony two officers of the gun in awful conflict with it. 'The old story,' we mutter. The whole fleet goes about and we begin jockeying again.

At length there comes across the water a voice. It says:

'Oy! The gun's broke. I'll give you a shout in half a minute.'

We look at our watches, still inflamed with the authentic thrill of Cowes, and again approach the line. Half a minute passes—one minute—a minute and a half. Vague cries go up from the manœuvring yachts: 'Have we started?' 'What about it?' and also 'Oy!' We look expectant at the club-house, but there is no man to be seen. Together we raise an angry shout of protest, one vast infuriated, 'Oy!' At this a man rushes out from the door of the club, a glass of something in his hand, and gives a loud amorphous yell. This we take to be an imitation of a starting-gun and we make for the line,

Suburban Scenes

still plaintively inquiring, some of us, 'Oy! Oy! Have we started? Oy!'

As for me, at this moment I am invariably in the worst possible position, travelling in the wrong direction, and blanketed by the tug. However, I go about smartly and find upon my lee bow a ladies' rowing eight in the act of turning round, which takes a long time to do. Caught between the ladies and the tug, I put my boat into the wind and drift between them on the tide, regarded with curiosity and amusement by the oarswomen, who believe all yachtsmen to be mad. Yachtsmen, on the other hand, consider rowing to be the sport of lunatics. It is a queer world, my hearties.

Having drifted safely but ignominiously past the ladies (to whom I explain that I am in the act of yacht-racing) I find myself 'in irons', a condition in which the boat will go neither in one direction nor the other and the sail flaps senselessly and everybody else is much amused.

This may go on for two minutes or twenty. Meanwhile Mr. Briggs is having an altercation with a sculler, and small boys on the bank with unconscious irony implore me to 'give them a ride'.

At long last, however, the boat 'pays off' and we are away. By this time Mr. Tonkes is disappearing round the first corner.

All that now remains is to finish the race. But after a start so full of incident it is no wonder that the rest of the proceedings fall comparatively flat and are not worth recording in detail.

RESULT

		<i>Corrected Times</i>					
		H.	M.	S.	H.	M.	S.
<i>Bluebell</i>	.	3	21	4	4	10	11
<i>White Witch</i>	.	3	39	6	3	48	20
<i>Redwing</i>	.	3	48	20	3	39	6
<i>Green Fly</i>	.	4	10	11	3	21	4
<i>Arethusa</i> fouled a mark-buoy and gave up.							
<i>Clytie</i> fouled a pleasure-steamer and sank.							
							4th
							3rd
							2nd
							1st

A. P. H.

A Guide to Short Story Writing

It is said that drinking as an outlet for masculine interests in the U.S.A. is yielding to the motor-car. We should love to see two Americans tossing who pays for the third Ford. (20.8.24.)

A GUIDE TO SHORT STORY WRITING

THE SIMPLE LITTLE LOVE STORY

In this lesson I propose to discuss that shortest cut to the editor's heart, the simple little love story.

If you are the fortunate sort of person who can exude this type of fiction, you may begin at once to make inquiries as to the safest way of evading the payment of super-tax; you are as good as made. Many a sturdy little fortune has been raised upon the cardiac affections of one girl, masquerading through the magazines under a variety of names. Why shouldn't *you* do it?

The simple little love story must not be confused with the tense love story, the analytical love story, the married love story, and all the other love stories which depend for their interest upon something else but love pure and simple. Character and such abstruse matters as that have no place in the type of story we are now considering.

If you are to become a successful exponent of the simple little love story, certain fundamental principles must first be absorbed. They are as follows:

(1) A man or a girl, seeing a certain member of the opposite sex for the first time, always decides within five seconds that this is the only girl (or man) in the world for him (or her).

(2) The meaning of the verb 'to love' is 'to contemplate urgent matrimony with'.

(3) A proposal of marriage may be made and seriously received within an hour of a first meeting. In any case it should not be delayed longer than a week.

(4) For two people to fall in love, the following conditions must be fulfilled: (a) they are meeting for the first time (nobody in short stories ever falls in love with a person whom he has known for any

A Guide to Short Story Writing

length of time); (b) their meeting takes place under unexpected or exceptional circumstances; (c) the girl is extraordinarily pretty (it is only people in real life who dream of falling in love with a girl who is not extraordinarily pretty); (d) there are reasons, apparently quite insurmountable, to prevent them from ever getting married (naturally no one ever wants to marry a person with whom it is possible to walk straight into church without any preliminary fuss, bother and upheaval; it simply is not done).

(5) The odds should be seven to two that the person with whom you fall in love is pretending to be somebody else. If by any chance this is not the case, it is up to you to play the game by assuming immediately and for no cause at all that she (or he) *is* somebody else. It's mistaken identity that makes the magazine world go round.

(6) Marriage is the be-all and end-all of life.

Having thoroughly mastered these rules of life and conduct, we may now proceed to the next important point. This is the language you are to employ in telling your story. It must be arresting. It must be strikingly original. This is quite easy. All you have to do is to invent your own words. Failing that, you may take perfectly sound old ones, and put them to questionable uses. I need only cite 'to glimpse' and 'to feature' in order to bring home to you what I mean; 'glimpse' and 'feature' were perfectly respectable nouns once.

Now we can get on to the recipe for our love story. Take:

One beautiful maiden, with large eyes, corn-coloured hair (ripe, of course) a tip-tilted nose and a scarlet mouth (scarlet, remember, not green or blue).

One incredibly good-looking (or fascinatingly ugly) young man with a well-knit frame, crinkly hair (essential) and other attributes to match.

One situation.

Stir well; add seasoning to suit the particular magazine you have in mind; and serve briskly.

In other words you need not bother over your hero and heroine; they are always the same as any other magazine hero or heroine. The only thing that makes the difference between simple little love stories is the situation.

A Guide to Short Story Writing

Having decided then upon this, push your tip-tilted heroine and your crinkly hero into it, let them flounder there for a bit, complicate with a case of mistaken identity, and then pull them out.

The result will, or should, come out something like this:

The girl in the scarlet bathing-suit, with her big blue eyes, her hair of the colour of ripe corn, her tip-tilted nose, and her lips, whose vivid hue almost eclipsed that of her bathing-suit itself, was surely the most perfect picture ever seen of demure young English girlhood. So thought Reginald Carstairs as he passed and repassed that section of the beach upon which she was sitting. He had known instinctively the very first time his eyes had rested upon her that this was the only possible girl in the world for him.

Gloomily he watched her as she threw handful after handful of sand, in her demure young English girlish way, into the grinning face of the big black retriever, who, barking merrily at his mistress, seemed quite unaware of the honour that was being done him. Reginald Carstairs wished desperately that she would throw some sand at him, if only a single handful.

As he passed her for the forty-second time his heart gave a sudden leap. For it had seemed to him that her eyes, wandering approvingly over his athletic well-knit frame, had lingered for a moment on his crinkly hair with something of a smile in their blue depths. The next minute the wind blew his hat off.

With long frolicsome bounds the retriever bounded to retrieve. I mean, the dog ran after it and, bringing it back in his mouth, dropped it at the girl's feet.

The smile in her eyes broke into candid blue ripples. 'Is this yours?' she demurelied.

Pupil: 'Demurelied?'

Professor: Magazines for 'said demurely'.

Pupil: Oh!

His hair crinkled towards her fondly. 'Yes,' he eagerly.

Pupil: 'Eagered?'

Professor: 'Replied, advancing eagerly to her.'

Pupil: Oh!

'To whom am I indebted for this kindness?'

A Guide to Short Story Writing

Her brows complexed. 'I am the Duchess of Kensal Green,' she simplified.

He stiffed. 'I beg your pardon. I thought—— But I am only a poor clerk. Good morning, your Grace.'

She glimpsed a half-smile at him from blue depths. 'You are in a great hurry, aren't you?' she softlied.

Pupil: Here! Wait a minute. I know the end of this story. She thinks he thinks she's a duchess and he thinks she thinks he's a clerk and she thinks—I mean he's really a peer's eldest son and she's really a typist, and it all comes out in the last paragraph when he folds her in his——

Professor (passionately): Of course it does. Are you trying to teach me my own story? *All* simple little love stories come out like that.

Pupil: Ah!

(Another big heart-throb next week.)

A. B. C.

We read that as a lad Mr. Jeffery Farnol was an accomplished boxer. But, like the rest of them, he became a writer. (20.8.24.)

THE HAMMOCK FALLACY

It is in the summer months that the cult of the hammock flourishes. Hammocks hibernate; it is one of their few really attractive attributes. And this popularity of the hammock in summer is very largely the fault of the bee-haunted-garden school of fiction writers. No bee-haunted garden is complete without one. In the cool shade of the sycamore the heroine reclines gracefully in her hammock, keeping that schoolgirl complexion and waiting for Sir Reginald. She does this most of the time; the author never tells us how she gets into the hammock or out of it. That is the difference between realism and romance.

At the cottage we have a bee-haunted garden and at the first hint of summer Angela insisted upon completing the picture.

The Hammock Fallacy

For Angela to get one of these attractive close-ups in her mind is always, with her, the immediate prelude to direct action.

'We must get a hammock,' she said.

I looked up with my kind tired smile and gave her a tolerant ear.

'Why?' I asked.

'Oh, because it's summer and everybody has one, and it's just the thing for the garden, and they look so jolly in the pictures, and—oh! heaps of reasons.'

'But I don't know whether my insurance covers risks by hammocks,' I said cautiously. 'It would probably come under "Aviation".'

'The Horrockses have got one,' said Angela.

'Then I suppose I must take the risk,' I said, sighing. The Horrockses are Angela's dearest friends, but it is unthinkable that they should be allowed to remain a hammock ahead of her.

'That's just the place for it, Angela,' I said more enthusiastically when we had adjourned to the garden. 'Between the raspberry canes and the rhubarb. Or we might hitch one end of it to that flowering lettuce and——'

'We really need some trees,' said Angela.

'Ah, yes. It has always saddened me that the fourth earl was obliged to fell all the timber. But let us give our minds to this problem. I think sycamores are the best.'

'The best what?' asked Angela.

'Trees,' I said patiently. I am always patient with Angela when she asks for obvious information.

'Trees for what?' she asked.

'For slinging hammocks, of course. They're used by some of the most famous hammock-slingers in the country.'

Angela looked a little dazed.

'But we haven't got any sycamores,' she said.

'Not yet. But if we were to get a hammock and lay it out flat on the ground and then plant a sycamore seed or pip or whatever it is at each end and then wait a bit we should one day have a beautiful pair of sycamore trees just the right distance apart. You see, Angela, the whole trouble with these *natural* trees, considered from a

The Hammock Fallacy

hammock-slinging point of view, is that they are either too close together or too far apart. Now, by giving a little thought and time to——'

But Angela had gone.

When I count my blessings, count them one by one, I shall not include the hammock, which arrived three days later. Even as we went about the task of assembling it there was a sort of ominous foreboding at the back of my mind. The things from which it was to hang in default of trees—our estate is not as yet very well timbered—reminded me too vividly of the tripod affair over the witches' cauldron in *Macbeth*. The line

'Double, double, toil and trouble,'

kept running through my head somehow. I realize now that it was subconscious prophecy.

'There,' said Angela, when I had knotted the last rope and driven in the last pin—'that is going to make all the difference to our summer.'

I see now, of course, that Angela was prophesying too. We were both inspired.

Angela had no intention of allowing grass to grow under her hammock once it was in position. She arranged a pile of cheerful-looking cushions in the bows, picked up the Japanese parasol and climbed enthusiastically on board. I stood by ready to save the women and children first.

Perhaps she overdid the enthusiasm. Whatever the reason, there was a violent roll to starboard, a convulsive jerk, a faint scream and the hammock turned itself inside out and swung idle and empty under a pitiless sky.

'Was anybody looking?' said Angela.

'Fortunately only your husband,' I said.

'How did it happen?'

'I expect you tried to mount from the wrong side. A hammock is probably like a horse; it gets restive if you try to get up on the starboard side. Try the port side whilst I hold its head.'

Angela advanced gamely to the attack and repeated the perform-

The Hammock Fallacy

ance the other way round. The schoolgirl complexion suffered most, owing to the loamy nature of the soil.

She picked herself up with a troubled expression.

'Why don't I stop in when once I am in?' she said.

'“Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself, and falls on the other,”' I quoted. 'Or it may be just knack,' I added kindly.

'Anyway, I'm going to do it this time.'

She did. It was touch-and-go for a minute or two, but she did.

'Now hand me the parasol—gently. And my book. And you'd better stay to turn over the leaves—I daren't move. And if you could push the red cushion a little higher up——'

It was an anxious victory.

That hammock has been the curse of our summer. There is a fearful fascination about it. It has been so insistently impressed on us by the bee-haunted gardeners that a hammock is an essential part of summer, that we can't keep away from it. Where it is concerned we are moral cowards.

It is a difficult and dangerous thing to get into, and all the while you are in it you are depressed by the thought that, if you don't fall out of it first, you will have to get out some time or other. Getting out of a hammock is one degree more difficult than getting in.

Even when you are in the infernal thing you are not happy. It isn't comfortable. It sags in the middle and you dare not wriggle. Added to this you invariably drop your book or the matches or something. Then you reach down precariously with one hand, trying desperately to maintain the balance of the thing with the other. You never succeed, and you finish up on the ground. Then you pick up your book and climb nervously back again.

No, the hammock is a fallacy. It is one of those things which everybody pretends to enjoy and nobody does enjoy. They tell me that sailors sleep in hammocks in the Navy. I can believe it. That's what made Jutland and Zeebrugge possible. A man who will sleep in a hammock will face anything.

But we have found a very jolly way out of our trouble. We got the notion at the Rodeo.

The Hammock Fallacy

We are going to give a select garden party, and there will be a handsome prize for anyone who can ride our bucking hammock for ten minutes.

The successful competitor wins the hammock.

L. du G. P.

THAT FLU

A short time ago—about a fortnight, to be accurate—I rang up my old friend Bill Bailey to see how the world was treating him. He reported that with him personally all was well, but that the nurse had 'flu. Somewhat to his annoyance his wife was nursing her as well as looking after their daughter. This was just the sort of thing that that most delightful person, Mrs. Bill, would do. But the daughter is a tearing and rampageous imp of about seven, and, as she couldn't go to school, it was plain that Mrs. Bill was going to have her hands full. I know that child.

Bill, I gathered, had rigged up a bed for himself in his den.

After some days I rang up again. The nurse, I learned, was slowly getting better. It had been rather a troublesome case, and her panel doctor, aggrieved by the too frequent use of his telephone, had made a gesture, and was preparing to sweep her from his panel. That, however, affected the future, not the present. Bill's only immediate trouble was that his daughter had 'flu, and his wife was nursing her. This, of course, did have the modified advantage of keeping the little beggar quiet, and the nurse, though not well enough to be any good, was not ill enough to be much trouble. Still, it was a bad time in the flat. Bill remarked that the housemaid, as a rule a lazy young devil, had turned out a regular little brick, and was looking after the nurse, fortified by repeated garglings, which seemed to amuse her.

A few days ago Bill rang me up to say that his wife had 'flu. His study had been added to the sick rooms of the flat, and he had a hospital nurse in, partly to look after Mrs. Bill and partly to lend a hand at entertaining the child, who was becoming convalescent and in consequence truculent. He was sleeping on a sofa in the drawing-

That Flu

room. I know that sofa. It is short, and Bill is a longish man. The housemaid and the cook were still mercifully going strong. The latter, a belligerent Scot, seemed to look on the whole thing as a divine visitation, sent by the Omnipotent as a reward for golf on Sundays, a practice to which both Baileys are, in health, addicted.

The next day, on making kind inquiries, I was informed that the housemaid had 'flu. Bill was not communicative, and I hadn't the heart to bother him with questions. The other victims were doing well. Bill said that he was occupied with the housework and was modifying his views as to the laziness of 'the girl', as her panel doctor called her.

Yesterday morning he rang me up to tell me that the cook had 'flu. (This, by the way, ought to soften her views on the workings of an irate Providence.) Adding that he was just off to do the cooking, he was right in concluding with the pious ejaculation, 'Heaven be good to us all!' Bill is no cook.

To-day I am seriously alarmed. I have rung up half a dozen times and have had no reply. I would go round this evening to inquire; but I have 'flu.

M. K. (*Dum Dum*)

A farmer living in Cornwall informed the local magistrates that he had no idea there had been a European war. Our sympathies are with him when he tries to find out who won it. (11.2.25.)

A GUIDE FOR SETTLERS IN NEW YORK CITY

TAXIMEN

Before the newly arrived Englishman leaves the protection of his hotel he should have the plan of what he is going to do carefully laid; any hesitancy or indecision once he is on the street is likely to land him either in the jail or the morgue. He should know definitely where he is going and the means by which he hopes to get there.

A Guide for Settlers in New York City

As to where he is going, my advice to him is to confine his wanderings to the block on which his hotel is situated and on no account ever during his stay to put his foot off the surrounding kerb. Each block has its own drug-store and its own shops and restaurants, and is to all intents and purposes self-supporting; he will be able to get along very happily as long as he does not let his curiosity lead him astray. If he tries to cross one of the streets, let him understand that he takes his life in his own hands and that I must decline to accept any responsibility for what happens to him.

HOW TO AVOID THE PERIL OF THE STREET

I know, however, that his curiosity *will* lead him astray, so I will do what I can to protect him. If he *must* go astray either in some vehicle or on foot, I advise him urgently to do it on foot, as it is quicker and much less expensive. People are supposed to be in less of a hurry in England than in New York, and one might suppose that the newly arrived Englishman would therefore prefer to use a cab or bus or a street car, or an 'L' or subway train; but I believe that he will not have been twenty-four hours in New York before he will be in as much haste as any native, and so I advise him to spurn the five ordinary means of urban travel and go on his feet. He will then get to his destination in the shortest possible time, if he gets there at all; the chance of his unintentionally stopping a cab or a bus or a street car before he arrives is the principal drawback to this means of progress.

In the hope of being some protection to him, I have examined the Times Square Casualty Lists for both 1923 and 1924. I found a surprising thing to be true. Of all the number who during these years tried to take the Times Square traffic in their own hands, not one was listed as ever having in his life driven a taxicab; the conclusion I draw from this is that men who have once driven cabs are immune from being run over, and this because they understand so well the strategy and habits of thought of taximen. Carrying this one step further, I decided that if only I could make the strange Englishman understand the character and methods of taximen as well as ex-drivers do, I should make him immune also. I might

A Guide for Settlers in New York City

recommend one or two of the more approved ways of escape; but I doubt if this would be wise, for these ways depend for their effectiveness so much on the peculiar conformation of the pedestrian question (thus a way that might preserve him if he were thin might prove to be his utter destruction if he were stout) that I think I shall be most useful by simply describing the nature of the enemy, leaving the Englishman to work out his way of escape to suit his own figure.

FROM BURGLAR TO TAXIMAN

Take, then, any normal Bolshevistic male with a deep-set grudge against the human race, particularly against Americans. On reaching adolescence, he has two courses open to him: he may go professionally into safe-breaking or qualify as a taxi-driver. The former course is the more hazardous because, unless he is exceptionally qualified for it, he won't be able to procure a driver's licence and the police will have the right to stop him from breaking a safe any time they feel like it. It is thus a course to be recommended, not as anybody's life-work, but as a temporary employment for extreme youth, its trials and dangers being usually a drawback to men who have passed the years of romance.

The method found to produce the most capable taximen is to use safe-breaking as an apprenticeship, and to progress after a year or two into licensed driving. Men who have tried to become drivers without this training almost invariably turn out to be absurdly lacking in ferocity, and their attitude when receiving the announcement of a fare's destination is often of such an amateurish tameness as to leave him completely unmoved.

BOOTLEG METERS FOR PRIVATE TAXIS

There is small satisfaction in warring against humanity in a cab that belongs to a large company, and a safe-breaker with ambition would do well to live quietly during his apprenticeship and save enough of his earnings to buy a cab of his own. The largest part of the expense attached to buying a cab is the cost of the bootleg meter. A man might just as well go out West and raise wheat as expect to

A Guide for Settlers in New York City

war with any success in a cab without a bootleg meter. The old-fashioned 50-cents-a-mile meter doesn't cost much, of course, but an up-to-date bootleg meter, with appliances for shifting the rate from 50-cents-a-mile to infinity naturally means a far more complicated mechanism and entails quite a large initial expense; getting the official seal for such meters raises the cost still higher, not to mention the additional outlay due to the Government's Luxury and Amusement Tax. They are called 'bootleg' meters, supposedly, for two reasons: they can be relied on to contain everything but what a fare expects, and they eat out the lining of a man's pockets in much the same way that bootleg alcohol eats out the lining of his stomach.

The men who drive for the large cab companies are weaklings with but little real zest for destruction; the men with their own cabs and their own meters are the ones the Englishman will have to fear most. If I can make him understand these he should be able to handle the salaried menials without much trouble.

Having then learned his trade through apprenticeship and exchanged his cold chisel and oxygen-torch for a cab and a bootleg meter, he goes over to some street on the Brooklyn water-front and searches in all the ash-cans and refuse-barrels until he finds a supervised cap that has been out in the weather long enough to discourage impertinence on the part of his prospective fares; he is now ready to go on the war-paths, as the streets of the Great City are familiarly called. Let him remember one thing more; to preserve a complete silence. This is a precautionary measure; the traffic police are not particularly friendly to him anyway, and if he said what he looked he could be arrested.

ONE-WAY STREETS

To help drivers to preserve that perpetual irritability and bad humour which are so essential in forcing an outsize tip from the pocket of a fare, all of the cross-town streets of the Great City have been legislated to be 'one way'. This creates a very useful little situation, and a driver wishing to replenish his ill will towards the world can do so by simply trying to make a one-way street go the other way. This will bring ear-splitting whistles from half a dozen

A Guide for Settlers in New York City

policemen, who after a while will stroll over and question him on such personal matters as where he was brought up and who he thinks he is and how he'd like to cool his heels for a week in the county jug. Having gone through this, the natural ferocity of the driver's contempt for his fare is so augmented that it should be able to draw out in a couple of tips money enough to pay for recovering his licence, which he has probably left with the half a dozen policemen.

Being in this reinvigorated state of mind he will attack the Englishman on sight from either of two angles: if he can get him into his cab he will attack him with the bootleg meter; if he can't get him into his cab he will attack him with the two front mudguards as the stranger tries to cross a war-path. . . . The first principle of defence for the Englishman is therefore not to get in a taxicab, and never to go off his native block. Now and then he will find a cab coming up on the sidewalk after him; but I hope I have made the taximan's character and methods sufficiently understood to enable the Englishman to defend himself against any such surprises.

P.S.—If the driver starts to shoot, as he often does, don't hesitate to consult a policeman.

B. F. (*Manhattan and U.S.A.*)

It is the business of a publicity agent to adopt really new stunts. We read that an actress has just *found* a string of pearls. (20.5.25.)

THEATRE RHYMES

THE PLAYWRIGHT

If you wish to write drama to capture the stage

You must castigate all the defects of the age.

You must picture Society as a morass

In which every man is a knave or an ass;

Theatre Rhymes

*In which every woman's a flirt or a shrew
With too much to spend and too little to do.
They have cast aside shame and ambition and hope,
They all of them drink and they most of them dope.
The gentlemen bully and gamble and swear;
The ladies mix cocktails and shingle their hair.
The gentlemen occupy most of their lives
In paying attention to other men's wives;
The ladies so rashly make free with their charms
That they're found by their husbands in other men's arms.
When thus they're discovered, all parties of course
Proceed with delight to arrange a divorce.
If Society thus you're prepared to arraign,
It will flock to your drama again and again,
And, although it's unlikely to see that you meant
To chasten its folly and make it repent,
It will listen delighted to all that you say
And applaud you for writing a capital play.*

G. B.

FIGHTING THROUGH

A FIRE STORY

I was dozing in the study about half-past nine one evening when my wife abruptly disturbed me.

'Henry, I think the house is on fire,' she cried.

I woke up at once.

'You think?' I replied. 'You ought to know.'

'I can smell something burning. Can't you?'

'Yes,' I agreed presently. 'I can. What is it?'

'Never mind what it is. Come and put it out.'

Hand in hand, for she had torn me out of my chair, we passed into the hall. It was full of smoke. I began to cough and my eyes started smarting painfully.

'Rose is out,' my wife informed me. 'What on earth are we to do?'

Fighting Through

She spoke as if the quelling of fires was one of the outstanding accomplishments of our treasure.

'I am here, dear,' I reminded my wife. 'Leave everything to me. One thing at a time.'

Meanwhile the smoke seemed to increase in density and, though no coward, I felt that the investigation of a blazing basement might be a terrible ordeal.

'Do—do something, Henry, for goodness' sake.'

Now, if ever, seemed to be the time to use the telephone.

I grasped the receiver. Smoke wreaths curled up my nostrils. Clearly no time must be lost. 'Exchange! Fire!' I screamed.

There ensued a period of terrible suspense.

'Hello,' said Exchange suddenly. 'I want *you*.'

Click—click—brr—Johnson at the other end, a neighbour of ours.

'Hello—that you, Coot?'

'Hello,' I said. 'Look here——'

'Hello—is that Coot speaking?'

'Yes, it's me, but——'

'Can you golf to-morrow?'

'Yes, but——' (Here I broke down, coughing.)

'Can't hear, old boy.'

'We're on fire! Geroff line——' (Here I choked.)

'Can't hear, old boy.'

My wife, who had been dancing with impatience, snatched the receiver away from me.

'Do get off the line, Mr. Johnson,' she said, 'we're on fire—fire! Bother the man: he won't understand. FIRE!' she screamed at the top of her voice. 'We want the engine. Get off the line. No, no, *not* an engine off the line.'

She threw down the receiver on to its hook and turned to me in a state of incipient imbecility.

'The fool thinks it's a railway accident.'

'He would,' I said.

Telephone bell. Johnson again.

'Hello—cut off, weren't we?' he began brightly. 'Touching this golf game. Hello—are you there?'

Fighting Through

I tried to stop coughing and articulate slowly and distinctly.

'Johnson, our house is on fire,' I said. 'We want the fire-engine. Our house is on fire. We want the fire-engine. Our house——'

At last he seemed to understand.

'Your house?' he shouted. 'Good Lord! You'd better ring up the brigade. Don't bother about looking up their number. Just call "Fire!" and you'll be put straight through to the fire-station. Ring up the police too, I should. Don't bother about looking up their number either. Just say "Police!" and you'll be put straight through to the police-station. I'll get off the line so as to give you a clear call. Good Lord! Good-bye.'

He rang off.

My wife and I succumbed to a bad fit of coughing, as much from exasperation as from the smoke.

'You'd better go downstairs,' my wife suggested as soon as she could speak.

'Yes, in a moment,' I replied, and took up the telephone receiver.

'Hello,' I said—'hello——'

This time I got straight through.

'Hello—yes, hello—what, what—who is it?' inquired an excited voice.

Good heavens! the line had not been cleared and there was Johnson again.

'It's Coot,' I panted. 'Want to get fire-station. Ring off.'

He lost his head.

'I'll try from this end,' he shrieked. 'Fire! Fire! Police! Fire! Police!——'

We shouted together, furiously rattling our receiver hooks. 'Exchange! Exchange! Exchange!'

'Number, please!'

'FIRE! POLICE!' we bawled as one man.

Click—click—brr—click—whizz——

'P'leece,' said a far-away gruff voice.

'Fire!' I screamed.

Somehow or other Johnson also had got through, and we all began talking together.

Fighting Through

'Ullo, 'ullo. 'Ow many more of you on the line?'

'FIRE!' I reiterated, and gave my name and address. I could hear Johnson giving his, though goodness only knew what for.

'Whose fire is it?' demanded the P'leece.

'Mine,' I sobbed at him. '292 Pembroke Road.'

The officer took a long time to come to a decision.

At last he said, 'I can't leave the station.'

This infuriated me beyond all bounds.

'Nobody wants you,' I roared. 'We want the brigade to leave the station, and precious quickly too. We just thought you ought to know, that's all. Get off the line—you—you——'

A frightful spasm of coughing precluded further speech and I groped for my wife. She was gone. Good heavens! was she even at this moment lying insensible in a holocaust? Panic-stricken, I attacked the telephone once more. At all costs the alarm must be given. Shouting some words of comfort which I hoped would reach my wife's ears, I found myself being heckled by the supervisor. Breathlessly I explained the urgency of the position. The supervisor did her best. After what seemed an eternity I heard a voice say 'Fire-station.' Through at last.

'FIRE!' I gurgled. '292 Pembroke Road.'

'The brigade's gone out,' I was informed briefly.

It was the final blow. As I reeled beneath it I fell into the arms of my wife, who had just emerged from the haze.

'The brigade's gone out,' I said wildly.

'So's the fire,' she replied. 'I went downstairs. It was only your socks scorching in the kitchen and the register had fallen down, so no wonder the place was full of smoke. I do think you might have gone with me.'

My relief was tremendous.

'The main thing,' I said, 'is that you, darling, are safe. I thought I had lost you—my right hand.'

At this juncture the telephone bell rang once more. It was Johnson again, apparently demented.

'Hello, Coot,' he yelled. 'Hold on, old boy; I'm at the fire-station—ran all the way. I'm coming round now—ON THE ENGINE!'

Fighting Through

His voice rose to a frenzied scream and he was gone before I could answer.

'Johnson's coming on an engine,' I reported faintly.

'And there's nothing to put out,' said my wife.

I was struck by a happy idea.

'You can put out the whisky,' I said. 'Let us at least welcome our friends as warmly as we can.'

R. W. (*Woon*)

WHY I BOUGHT A — CAR

I didn't mean to. It was the first stand I went up to really, and the young man asked me if I was interested at all, and I said that I was.

I knew quite well that he intended to talk to me about the engine, but I didn't want him to do that, partly because I don't know very much about engines and partly because I had found out from the advertisements and things that his engine was much better than any of the other engines at the same price in the show. So I asked him whether he thought the driving-seat would be comfortable for me, and he said, 'Won't you get in and try it?'

So I got in and sat down and pulled the brakes about and pressed the clutch, just as all the other people were doing, some of them because they were interested, and some of them, I fancy, because they were so tired of standing up and walking round and round. But there's a limit, I think, to the time that one can spend standing on an accelerator when there's no life and bustle, so to speak, going on underneath the bonnet. So after a little while I got out and wondered what to say next.

As a matter of fact there were all sorts of things that I should have liked to tell the young man, if only I had known him well enough and dared to do it. He was a nice-looking young man, wearing an old public-school tie. I should have liked to tell him about a friend of mine who has one of his cars—the 1924 model, of course—and ran into a grammar school the other day. I tried to imagine the conversation if I did begin to tell him that little tale:

Why I bought a — Car

I. A friend of mine has one of these cars, and he ran into a grammar school the other day.

He (very coldly). And what grammar school was that, pray?

I (hastily reassuring him). Oh, quite a good one. A very old foundation. Edward VI, I believe. He ran into it just on the right-hand side of the gateway and crumpled up his mudguard. One of the assistant-masters came out and saw him, but he was quite nice about it. He said they had always tried to make the entrance as difficult as they could. . . .

No, I didn't feel I could possibly bother the young man about that.

And then there is another friend of mine who has one of his cars but can never make it start in the morning, either because the garage is too damp or else because he doesn't use thin enough oil, or else because life is just like that. He ties the bonnet all round with coats and blankets and rugs, and puts a miner's lamp inside, and runs the engine for an hour before he goes to bed. But when he gets up in the morning he has to turn the handle so long that he feels like an organ-grinder instead of a business man, and quite often the whole family has to collect and push him out of the garage and away down the hill, so that he can earn their daily bread.

But I didn't care to tell the young man that either.

And then there is our dog. There was no place in his car that I could see to which we could fasten our dog. We have tried fastening him to the door-handle in the car we have got now. Once he jumped out and dangled by the collar on the lead. It was a terrible moment before we got him in again. There ought to be a staple fixed in the middle of the floor of a little car to which one can fasten the lead of a dog.

And then, of course, there is Aunt Caroline. I don't mean that Aunt Caroline ever jumped out and dangled; the trouble about her is her umbrella. She *will* take it with her, and it slips down on to the mat and tumbles out when the door is opened, and somebody treads on it. What is needed really in a little car is one of those basket arrangements at the side that they always used to have in governess-carts.

Why I bought a — Car

But I felt instinctively that the young man had far too technical and mechanical a mind to be interested in Aunt Caroline and the dog.

Nor did I like to say anything to him about books. Very often, when I go down into the country for week-ends, and have to write an article about 'Autumn Solitude' or 'Wild Geese in our Marshlands', I want to take one or two volumes of *The Encyclopaedia* down with me for the sake of references. And a little car does not hold many volumes of *The Encyclopaedia Britannica* with comfort and ease. If you had ever seen URA—ZYM bouncing over a really bumpy bit of road or on a small wayside bridge you would know what I mean. I should like to have asked him for how many volumes of *The Encyclopaedia Britannica* the car was sprung, but I did not dare to do that.

I was afraid also to ask him whether the car went backwards very fast. I don't know how it is but in the car we have now, directly one uses the reverse gear, even though there is a steep uphill behind, the thing leaps to the top as it were with one bound, like a chamois. And I have seen other little cars behave in the same way. But the young man seemed to me to have too lofty a mind to enter into little troubles like this.

The fact is I didn't know *what* to say. So I looked at the dashboard very closely and said in rather a stern manner, 'I notice your clock isn't going.'

He admitted that, but said it could easily be wound up.

'How?' I inquired.

'By means of a little screw at the top,' he said, indicating with the thumb and forefinger the method by which it was done.

'What,' I said, 'by hand?'

He confessed that this was so.

Then I went round to the other end of the car and bent down to look at the back axle. Before I had got more than a brief glimpse of it my hat fell off. I crammed it hastily on my head and stood upright again. I fancied the young man looked rather amused about something, so I thought I would take him down a peg.

'It stands rather low, doesn't it?' I said. 'Don't you think if it was

Why I bought a — Car

standing by the pavement somebody might trip over it without noticing that it was there?’

He refused to admit this.

‘I like the black stuff on the tyres,’ I said. ‘It gives the whole thing a very elegant appearance.’

After that I couldn’t find anything else to say at all, so I said I would buy the car.

He said I could have one just like it delivered in two days.

‘But I wanted to buy this one,’ I explained.

‘There’s not the slightest difference,’ he assured me. ‘We’ll give you a trial run any time you like.’

‘On my car,’ I said, ‘or this?’

‘Well, on a last year’s model,’ he said. ‘The running will be exactly the same.’

So of course I don’t know anything at all about my new —. Nevertheless I have bought it, and I cannot help feeling what a merciful escape I have had from buying all the others as well. If I had gone even as far as the next stand I should most certainly have bought a —.

E. V. K. (*Evoe*)

THE HORRORS OF PEACE

CIPHERS

Division to Brigade.—Cpplakxnbpzogem.

Brigade to Division.—Your code message received.

D. to B.—Cpplakxnbpzogem.

B. to D.—Your cipher message received. (*Half an hour elapses*).

B. to D.—Please forward to-day’s keyword.

D. to B.—On no account may keywords be referred to in clear.

B. to D.—Error regretted but cannot decipher without it.

D. to B.—Use yesterday’s.

B. to D.—Regret yesterday’s keyword destroyed at midnight in accordance with orders.

D. to B.—Surely remember yesterday’s keyword.

B. to D.—Mess waiter believes remembers.

The Horrors of Peace

- D. to B.*—On no account should mess waiter remember keyword.
B. to D.—Regret mess waiter does not remember keyword.
D. to B.—Mess waiter should not have known keyword.
B. to D.—Mess waiter did not know keyword.
D. to B.—Cpplakxnbpzogem.
B. to D.—Please forward to-day's keyword.
D. to B.—Your reference to mess waiter not understood.
B. to D.—Error regretted explanation follows.
D. to B.—Expedite explanation.
B. to D.—Xrrxr rxgrttxd.
D. to B.—What keyword are you using?
B. to D.—Regret cannot refer to keyword in clear.
D. to B.—Cpplakxnbpzogem.
B. to D.—When may keyword be expected, please?
D. to B.—Prepare receive by wireless.
B. to D.—Dispositions complete.
D. to B.—Report receipt.
B. to D.—Uncle Toby's talks on tadpoles very clear and interesting but no keyword.
D. to B.—You are on wrong wave-length.
B. to D.—Xrrxr rxgrttxd.
D. to B.—Verify your last message.
B. to D.—Xrrxr rxgrttxd.
(One hour elapses.)
D. to B.—Presume your message incorrectly enciphered.
B. to D.—Have sent no cipher message having no keyword.
D. to B.—Cpplatxnbpzogem.
B. to D.—Nxt xndxrstxxd.
D. to B.—Are you using regulation code?
D. to B.—Nx.

I. S. O. P.

A Russian writer declares that Germany would like another war with us. But they haven't paid for the last one yet. (8.7.25.)

A Mystery Fish

A MYSTERY FISH

Up to the present everybody seems to have discovered something except me. You can't open a paper without reading about a new kind of animal that has been found in Central America, or a new disease that some doctor has invented in his spare time, or a new germ to account for one of the old diseases, or a new pattern of skull that has been dug up by an allotment-holder in the outer suburbs. The objects discovered, though bearing no relation to each other, have one thing in common, and that is the prefix 'mystery', without which no good journalist will allow them to enter a headline:

'Mystery Animal Amazes Chimbopaxi.'

'Mystery Disease Attacks Metropolis.'

'Mystery Germ that Causes Indigestion.'

'Mystery Skull in Willesden Cabbage-Patch.'

Possibly you have been brought up to believe that the word 'mystery' is a noun—but this is a digression. The point is that I too am now a discoverer. I have discovered a mystery fish. And, if you think I am going to let such a thing happen without writing to the papers about it, you are an optimist.

The Mystery Fish never varies in colour, which is dirty white; in consistency, which is flabby; in smell, which is strong; or in taste, which is neutral. As for its name—well, even the people who provide it can never quite make up their minds on this point. Sometimes they describe it as halibut, sometimes as turbot, sometimes as cod and sometimes as brill. But neither halibut nor turbot, neither cod nor brill, is its true name. It is *Piscis Locomotensis*, the one and only, the unmistakable Train Fish.

You know it, patient reader, only too well. You cannot sit down to any meal on any railway journey without meeting it, generally preceded by tomato soup and followed by roast mutton. It is as inevitable and as monotonous as the grave. No doubt you have often wondered out of what sea or what river this loathsome creature comes, what its habits are, and more particularly why you never meet with it except on railway trains. Well, for many years I have been wondering the same thing; and now after long and diligent

A Mystery Fish

research I have evolved a theory which I think is the only plausible one.

The train fish is not a salt-water one. It is not, in the usual sense of the word, a fresh-water fish. It is a hot-water fish. It lives in the boiler of the engine. When meal times approach and attendants are rushing up and down the corridors shouting, 'Take-your-places-in-the-restaurant-car', the engine-driver simply plunges a landing-net into the boiler, extracts as many fish as are needed and hands them over to the train cook. The cook then throws them into cold water, which immediately kills them; and there they are, ready boiled and at just the right stage of tepidity to be dished up.

That is my theory about the Mystery Fish. It may not, perhaps, be quite accurate; but at any rate I have managed to make use of the word 'mystery' as an adjective. I am now a full-blown journalist.

J. S. (*Jan*)

THE RIGHT TO KILL

A HOLOCAUST IN ONE ACT

(It has been proposed many times that doctors should in certain special circumstances have the 'Right to Kill' (some of them, of course, have been doing it for years, but not officially). Meanwhile wives, husbands, jealous lovers and others have rushed in where the more pedantic members of the medical profession feared to tread, and have been acquitted by sympathetic juries. All who have impossible relatives to dispose of will readily agree that the idea might well be extended. In the following play the idea is treated in the characteristic fashion of the modern dramatist.)

SCENE: *An alcove of a ball-room.*

PERIOD 1930.

An inexpressibly bored and smart young couple sit apart. The girl's head is completely shaven except for two tiny wisps of hair projecting from the side of her head to the middle of her cheeks. Her dress is practically trans-

The Right to Kill

parent. *The young man looks like 'Uncle John, Balliol, 1860' in the family albums.*

SHE. *(drawling lovingly.)* My swinehound!

HE. *(ditto)* Yes, my reptile? How wonderful your hair looks to-night!

SHE. *(crooning.)* My cur. *(Then crisply.)* Did you note that yet another woman has put her husband out of his misery and the jury have unanimously acquitted her? The idea of exterminating the too-impossible is gaining ground. Your family is intolerable, my pest.

HE. Yours is pretty awful, darling.

SHE. *(icily.)* The 1930 girl has no use for early-Georgian pleasantries such as 'darling'. She likes to face facts.

HE. *(humbly.)* Yes, my hell-cat.

(She fawns upon him.)

SHE. Would it not be kinder to put our dreadful families out of their misery?

HE. It would be kinder.

SHE. Mother?

HE. Never the same since she lost all her young lovers.

SHE. Father?

HE. Talking of how he did the eighteenth hole in one has lost him all his friends. It would be kinder.

SHE. The others?

HE. What about Janet?

SHE. In love always with seven men at once—there can be no real happiness for her.

HE. Uncle George? Aunt Mary?

SHE. Neither of them fit to live.

HE. Good! Then let us do it.

SHE. *(winding her arms lovingly around him.)* Oh, my toad, my toad!

HE. *(still more lovingly.)* My leprous one! How I abhor you!

SHE. How wonderfully you said that. My sex complex is stirred. *(She shivers.)*

HE. By the way, I suppose we ought to inform the police?

The Right to Kill

SHE. Certainly, they might never find out otherwise. Besides, neither of us wants to be bothered with the bodies.

HE. Oh, bodies? Yes, I suppose they would have to be removed. (*Looking OFF.*) Here is mother. (*Showing stiletto.*) Shall I? Or will you?

SHE. Is it your mother or mine?

HE. Mine, I think.

SHE. Then allow me.

(*The Mother comes fluttering in, a dear girl of fifty-five.*)

MOTHER. *Mon Dieu!* In the arms of another!

HE. Mother! Not again already?

MOTHER. No. He. Another's. Gone to her. They say she is a virgin.

HE. Scandal. To you I counsel retirement, chastity and contemplation.

MOTHER. (*giggling.*) I am not so old as that. Every age has its compensations.

SHE. (*to him.*) Shall I?

HE. Oh, I think so.

(*She shoots the Mother. The pistol makes no more noise than a boy's cap-pistol, but it does its work.*)

SHE. Ring the bell, will you? (*He does so. She regards the Mother gravely.*) After all, she was your Mother, you know.

HE. I was never sure.

(*Two footmen come in.*)

SHE. Take this away. Inform the police. Say I killed her to put her out of her intolerable misery.

(*The Footmen carry off the Mother.*)

HE. Have we done right?

SHE. I am sure of it. If you will see to Uncle George and your father, I will see to the rest of the family.

HE. There are many others at the ball to-night who deserve our attention.

The Right to Kill

(Enter a Profiteer bemoaning the times.)

SHE. Who is this? I don't know him.

HE. No one does. He is our host.

PROFITEER. Oh, oh! You young people don't know what these things cost—orchids glacés—frightful, fifty pounds a mouthful. Bad times now, bad times. No profits. Prices are too stabilized. It's when prices bound up and down that there are opportunities for men like me with initiative and scope.

HE. *(to her.)* Allow me. Shall I?

SHE. Oh, I think so.

PROFITEER. *(violently.)* What industry needs to-day is bigger and better wars. . . .

(The young man slides his stiletto down the Profiteer's back.)

HE. Ring, will you?

(She rings. Two Footmen come in.)

HE. Take this away. Inform the police. Say I killed him in the interests of society. The medal and the illuminated address to be sent here.

(The Footmen remove the body.)

SHE. I am tired, my emasculate.

HE. *(kindly.)* Put off killing your Aunt till to-morrow, then.

SHE. I will breakfast on a thimbleful of violet tea and see how I feel then. Who are these?

HE. *(firmly.)* These must be attended to to-night. It is either a dramatic author stealing his wit from a High Court Judge, or *vice versa*.

SHE. What has the author written?

HE. Nothing but a play called 'Beastliness', and a few verses on 'Putrefaction'.

SHE. Allow me.

HE. Wait. The Judge is noted for his witty remarks when a man is on trial for his life.

SHE. Be generous and let me have both.

HE. I should like the judge, but have it your own way.

The Right to Kill

- SHE. Many thanks. May I try your stiletto?
(The Author and the Judge come on nudging each other over their jeux d'esprit.)
- JUDGE. One of the best jokes I ever made was in the Bonnington murder trial—ha! ha! you saw it? Even the prisoner had to laugh, though it told heavily against him.
- SHE. Shall I?
- HE. Oh, I think so.
(She pushes the stiletto into the Judge's shoulders and he sits down suddenly. The Author does not notice anything.)
- AUTHOR. My new play that I have just finished will take the town by storm. There isn't a single line that isn't delicately suggestive. . . .
(She stabs him quickly, and the Young Man shoots as well, and they go on shooting and stabbing to make sure.)
- SHE. Were we right?
- HE. We were.
- SHE. *(coming over to him.)* My chanticleer!
- HE. My Gorgon's head! I shall always be faithful to you.
- SHE. *(looking into his eyes)* That fatal streak in your temperament. It is sad that I shall never be faithful to you. Am I not destined to make you unhappy all your life?
- HE. Always.
(She turns from him. He raises his pistol and points it at her. She turns and sees him.)
- SHE. Allow me. *(He hands it to her.)* Shall I?
- HE. Oh, I think so.
(She shoots him. He falls untidily.)
- SHE. *(gravely.)* It is better so. *(She shoots herself.)* And still better so.

CURTAIN

W. P. L.

The American Tourist at Home

A newspaper recently printed an article on theatrical superstition. It may not be generally known that in American film circles it is considered lucky to be the seventh wife of a seventh husband. (2.11.25.)

THE AMERICAN TOURIST AT HOME

THE AMERICAN SPIRIT

I must have died last night some time between 5.0 and 6.0 a.m. Anyway, I saw 5.10 on the face of my alarm-clock but did not hear the milkman.

I was alone in the apartment. Dreadfully alone. Will Newman had gone away for a few days and in celebration of his departure we had bought a bottle of Marcola. (I may have the name wrong, but the name doesn't matter; call it Marcola.)

Will got it in a grocery store on Fourth Street (a grocery store, mind you).

'Hello!' said Will. 'Look at this.'

Several bottles stood in the window, the middle one having a card tied round its neck. On the card was written:

'MARCOLA, PER BOT. 75c.

GENU WINE!'

'Seventy-five cents!' exclaimed Will. 'I never heard of wine for less than two dollars. Come along; I'll give you a farewell party.'

We went into the grocery store and bought it from a man polishing apples on the hem of a muddy white apron.

The bottle was emptied soon after ten and Will hurried off to get an eleven o'clock train. I went as far as the door and shook him fondly by the hand.

'So long, old scout,' I said. 'The old house will be empty without you.'

'Keep the home fires burning,' said Will.

And with that we sang the chorus of this song through once, softly.

Afterwards I said, swallowing a lump in my throat, 'So long, old scout; the old house will be terribly empty without you.'

The American Tourist at Home

'Keep it burning,' said Will and wrung my hand.

I went to bed.

I may possibly have dozed for half a minute upon first lying down; I don't think so, but it is possible. It doesn't matter; it didn't rest me. If anything it had the opposite effect. The backs of my knees were becoming very tired. They felt as if all day I had been trying to touch the floor with the palms of my hands. I couldn't remember doing any such thing. The thought that I might have done it and was now unable to recall anything about it gave me some worry and I put back a blanket. I decided that I was half asleep and should undoubtedly be able to remember all the next morning.

Putting off the blanket reminded me that I was very warm; I put off another. My knees were very weak. I couldn't understand how they had ever had strength enough to become so weak. They could hardly throw off the blanket. My hands, I mean. I looked at the clock. It showed 11.35 or thereabouts. 'The lone and level night stretched far away. The lone and level man stretched far away. The lone and level——' I turned my pillow over and lay down again.

I soon became conscious of a taste in my mouth; it was as if a cake of sulphur had been negligently left burning there, except that it was stickier; it was more like half-dried glue. I went to the bathroom and drank a glass of water. This did no particular harm in itself, but the passage to the bathroom and back chilled me into a cold perspiration. I crawled into bed and pulled up all the blankets.

The next thing I realized was that I was trying to choke myself. I had somehow become very much involved in my arms; they were knotted round my neck, hands and elbows, getting into each other's way as they fought to reach my wind-pipe. One hand had taken a firm hold of my chin from behind and begun twisting, no doubt intending to put an end to the whole business at once by simply cracking my neck.

'Here, here,' I cried, rushing up just in time. 'What's all this?'

The hand loosed its hold. I snapped my head out of its grip and popped bolt upright in bed. No attempt to follow me was made.

I sat shivering in the cold for a moment, then it slowly dawned on me that something had gone wrong with the mechanism in my

The American Tourist at Home

throat. The passage was closing up. It was not yet entirely closed, but it was obviously working towards that end. The small open passage was obstructed by what seemed to be some old pieces of barbed wire. The entanglement was so built that, when I swallowed, the contraction of my throat caused the barbs to jab into me.

'Dear, dear me,' I said, because I couldn't understand how it could possibly be barbed wire; I hadn't swallowed any barbed wire in years.

I went to the bathroom again and drew a glass of water with the idea of attempting to flood the entanglement out of place. As I was about to drink it I paused; after all, I had no way of knowing for certain that it was barbed wire. If, instead of barbed wire, it was a razor-blade or a pinch of tacks I should get into more trouble than ever by washing it down to my stomach. I looked into the back of my mouth to see if I could make sure what it was. I couldn't see far enough to discover anything. I thought I got a glimpse of a piece of an old bottle, but there was no way of being certain. I decided, however, to be on the safe side and not drink anything.

I staggered into Will's vacant room, pulled all the blankets off his bed and returned. I threw them on my bed and covered them over with a woollen bathrobe.

The bell in the Metropolitan Tower struck two.

Some time passed before the twitching began. When it began I calmly reached out and turned on the light near my bed; I wanted to get one more look at the world, such as it was, before I left it. I knew the end could not be far off now.

I have an alarm-clock that I paid a dollar for some years back. It has a way of popping every minute or two as if it were running blindly and now and then stumbled. The only difference between it and me was that I twitched; both of us had about the same interval of peace. It popped and I answered with a twitch. I looked it in the eye.

'I never thought, old timer,' I began. "'Old timer!'" That's no so bad for a drowning man. Dying with a jest on his lips. "Old timer!"

I thought it would be a good idea to take my pulse while I could

The American Tourist at Home

still see the clock. Pretty soon I shouldn't be able to tell what my heart was doing.

I put my fingers on my wrist. I pressed them lightly at first, then more and more strongly. Then I removed them and laughed with a shade of bitterness. I hadn't any pulse. Of course I hadn't; I was a fool to think I might have; dead men don't have pulses.

'Ah, old clock, old timer,' I said. 'So they've put you in the coffin here with Caesar. You'll come in handy to wake the dead when the world ends.'

I put my hand over my heart.

'Yes, I thought so—perfectly cold. Quite dead. I should have preferred to leave a note of some sort saying where I had gone. But it's too late now. It's after five. Five o'clock on a dead man's chest. Yo, ho, ho and a bottle of Genu Wine. Dead dog. Dead dog. Perfect-ly d-e-a d do-o-o-og.'

About nine o'clock the next morning a messenger came with a telegram for me. It read:

'ARE YOU THERE NEWMAN.'

I crawled to my desk and replied:

'FUNERAL TO-MORROW AFTERNOON FROM THE HOUSE. MARCOLA.'

Later in the morning came this wire:

'KINDLY MAKE ARRANGEMENTS IF POSSIBLE FOR DOUBLE INTERMENT. NEWMAN.'

B. F. (*Manhattan and U.S.A.*)

A British artist has painted a miniature of Mussolini. We shouldn't have thought a miniature of him was possible. (27.1.26.)

DIET FOR AN INVALID

When I am ill my wife, who is the best woman in the world, nurses me with unremitting enthusiasm. She believes that nothing in illness

Diet for an Invalid

is more salutary than cleanliness. I confess that after a time I weary of washing. In the night watches, however, I am let off soap and water, and my wife's whole energy is concentrated on nourishment for her patient.

I have fallen into a feverish sleep when I am roused by a gentle tap on the back.

'Are you asleep?'

'Not now.'

'Did I wake you?'

'No, not to speak of.'

'Don't you think you ought to have some milk?'

'I don't think so, thanks.'

'I've got it here.'

'No, thanks.'

'Or soda and milk?'

'No, thanks.'

'Or soda alone?'

'Oh, I'll have some milk.'

'Will you have it warm?'

'No, cold.'

'I can warm it in a minute.'

'No, cold.'

'Isn't it better for you warm?'

'All right, warm.'

'Or will you have jelly?'

'No, I'll have some milk.'

'It's meat jelly.'

'No, I'll have milk.'

'Or there's sweet jelly.'

'No, milk.'

'You know you like jelly.'

'All right; I'll have jelly.'

'Meat jelly?'

'No, sweet jelly.'

'It was the meat jelly you liked.'

'Very well; meat jelly.'

Diet for an Invalid

'Have sweet jelly if you like.'

'No; I'll have meat jelly.'

'The sweet jelly would go nicely with the milk.'

'All right, sweet jelly.'

'With milk?'

'No.'

'It goes with milk.'

'All right.'

'Sweet jelly and milk, then?'

'Yes.'

'Have milk alone if you prefer it.'

'Good heavens!' I shout, 'you've got back to the beginning. I can't stand it all over again. I'll have milk alone, cold milk or hot milk, or soda and milk, or soda alone, or sweet jelly, or sweet jelly and milk, or sweet jelly and meat jelly, or meat jelly neat, but I *will* go to sleep.'

'Hush, dear! Don't talk so loud or you'll wake Baby. Wait a minute and I'll make you some gruel.'

My wife is quite the best woman in the world.

J. W. H.

ECONOMIES AT WHITEHALL

MINUTE I.

From Head of Department to Officer i/c 'A' Branch.

Please let me know the exact number of rooms occupied by 'A' Branch.

From O. i/c 'A' Branch to Deputy O. i/c 'A' Branch.

Please supply me with the information required.

From Deputy O. i/c 'A' Branch to Establishment Clerk.

For draft reply, please.

From Estabt. Clerk to Asst. Estabt. Clerk.

For attention.

From Asst. Estabt. Clerk to Messenger T. Brown.

Figures, please.

Economies at Whitehall

MINUTE 2.

To Asst. Estabt. Clerk.

Information herewith—

Rooms (smoking)	3
do. (tea)	1
do. (dormitory)	1
Lobby (anything)	1

Respectfully,

T. Brown,
Messenger.

I agree.

D. Willipool,
Asst. Estabt. Clerk.

Submitted.

J. Gaffer,
Estabt. Clerk.

I concur.

T. Humming,
Deputy O. i/c 'A' Branch.

Information herewith.

I. Pottersby,
O. i/c 'A' Branch.

MINUTE 3.

From Head of Department to O. i/c 'A' Branch.

It appears to me that time might be saved if my inquiries were addressed directly to Messenger T. Brown. Please let me have your observations.

From O. i/c 'A' Branch to Deputy O. i/c 'A' Branch.

Please give me your views on this.

From Deputy O. i/c 'A' Branch to Estabt. Clerk.

For draft reply, please.

From Estabt. Clerk to Asst. Estabt. Clerk.

For attention.

From Asst. Estabt. Clerk to Messenger T. Brown.

Reply, please.

MINUTE 4.

To Asst. Estabt. Clerk.

That's how it strikes me.

Respectfully, T. Brown, *Messenger.*

Economies at Whitehall

I agree. D.W.

Submitted. J.G.

I concur. T.H.

Reply herewith.

I. Pottersby,

O. i/c 'A' Branch.

MINUTE 5.

From Head of Department to Messenger T. Brown.

Please let me know how many officers in 'A' Branch may be considered redundant to establishment.

Reply.

Four (4).

Respectfully, T. Brown,

Messenger.

S. G. M.

ON A PRESENTATION CIGAR

*Oh, I've smoked plenty,
I dare say twenty,
Of different kinds of weed:
A Malaga Thunder,
Which same is a wonder
For putting you off your feed;
A Hamburg Bogey,
A Pittsburg Stogie,
An Adam and Eve Come-Back;
A Nesta, which is
The worst of the Trichies
And even a Burma Black.
The catholic puffer
Must sometimes suffer,
He cannot be sure of bliss;
I don't care if
It's a fourpenny whiff—*

On a Presentation Cigar

*But (pointing to alleged cigar) I never met a smoke
like this.*

*When young, for a caper,
I smoked brown paper,
Loaded with hawthorn leaves;
I've sampled a very
Tough Trimulgherry;
I've coughed over Rangoon Sleeves;
I've tried the fakey
Sumatras, the snaky
Manilas knotted in threes;
A choice Habana
Has brought Nirvana,
A Borneo made me sneeze.
Some I finished,
But others diminished
My pride as they knocked me flat;
Of the rest one puff
Was more than enough—
But (indicating gutter) I never met a smoke like that.*

E. P. W.

A writer says that whatever the result of the Boat Race both crews will uphold the usual traditions of English sport. But they can't *both* lose. (24.3.26.)

HOW TO DOCK A SHIP

Some people might think docking a ship is pretty easy. You just go straight in and stop the engines when you hit the back of the garage—dock, I mean. But when you have not got any petrol—steam, I mean—the business becomes more complicated.

In my young days I stood on the quarterdeck of my destroyer with two flags, a red one and a white one. When things were going well I held up my white flag; and when we bumped into anything,

How to Dock a Ship

or a wire snapped and cut two or three men in half, I held up the red. And then everyone ran round and got busy.

Too easy, you might say. Ah, but wait till it comes to docking a big ship, particularly a ship like the Very Latest Aircraft Carrier. It is only on these occasions that the true insignificance of the Navy really appears.

High up on the bridge stands the Captain, or maybe an Admiral or two. Occasionally he may take a pensive pace this way or that way, but mostly he just stands staring out across the water with the far-seeing eye of the sailor accustomed to wide horizons. (I think I've got that bit right; it's in all the best magazines.)

On the fo'c'sle the First Lieutenant juggles with wires and cables; some other chap does much the same on the quarterdeck, and the Commander dashes to and fro with a fleet of messengers ready for any emergency. All about the ship are sailors hauling and belaying. Tugs tug, heaving lines patter on the deck like hail, and all around is eager movement like the last day of a jumble sale.

But you and I, who know our dockings, are not deceived by this busy scene. The brains of the show are not here; these are merely the puppets.

Somewhere about the harbour, probably in a little rowing-boat manned by a couple of tramps in 'fearnought' suits three sizes too large for them, is a scruffy old man in a bowler hat. An air of anxious care surrounds him, and well it may. For if he blows his whistle five times instead of four the capstans on the jetty will heave round full speed, the wires will whine and crack, and very likely the ship will go into dock upside-down. It is to him that all the 'maties' look for guidance. Even the Commander puts on an extra burst of speed at the sound of the old man's whistle, and high up on the bridge the Captain gazes farther than ever across the wide water.

As a matter of fact the Captain is probably wondering when he'll be able to get ashore, for even when the ship is finally inserted into the dock and the gate is closed there still remains much to be done. Water has to be pumped out, wooden shores placed in position to keep the ship upright, wedges got ready, and a gangway erected to the side of the dock.

How to Dock a Ship

And Bowler Hat has yet to have his greatest triumph.

All is quiet in the dock save for the swish of the last few tons of disappearing water, and you and I are just feeling properly thankful that the show is nearly over. On a sudden there is a final blast from the whistle. Instantly a hundred dockyard mates leap joyfully to a hundred hammers, the roar of their blows mingling with the cries of those who have just missed the wedges and landed on each other's toes. Chips of wood and stone fly; the ship quivers and Bowler Hat, turning his back on this scene of noisy chaos so gratifying to his sense of power, spits carefully into the dock and goes home to tea, leaving the Captain to congratulate the Commander on the speed with which he, the Commander, has got the business finished.

The other day I failed in my usual practice of getting ashore with the Doctors and Paymasters.

'I want you to take charge aft, Mr. Boffin,' said the Commander. 'And try to secure the ship as soon as you can, because the Captain's in a hurry to get ashore.'

I may not be a clever chap, but I do sometimes have ideas. 'I'll see he doesn't have to wait, Sir,' I said, and called the boatswain's mate and whispered a hurried order. He looked a bit surprised, but then I'm becoming accustomed to having my strokes of genius laughed at. No true prophet is ever appreciated in his own ship.

Everything was going swimmingly, though even after the gate had shut and the water had begun to subside I was still busy holding up red and white flags and dodging heaving lines and wires and things. Suddenly the Commander appeared. 'Come along, Mr. Boffin,' he said sharply. 'What about the shore gangway?'

I permitted myself the faintest of smiles as I disclosed my great idea. 'No hurry about that, Sir,' I said gently, 'I've had the Captain's galley manned and tied up under the quarter. I was just going to order it alongside.'

The Commander seemed dumbfounded by my initiative. 'You've what?' he asked.

'I had the galley manned before we started, Sir,' I said, 'and made fast close astern so as to be ready for the Captain. The gangway always takes such a time getting secured that I thought it would

How to Dock a Ship

be quicker if his galley pulled him over to the side of the dock.'

'And how the devil is the galley going to float when the water's been let out of the dock?' demanded the Commander angrily as he rushed aft and looked over the stern.

Well, I confess I hadn't thought of that; and I must say the boat looked very funny suspended in mid air by its painter. But the Commander has no sense of humour. 'In my young days,' he said furiously, looking around for Bowler Hat to get the dock flooded again, 'a young officer who did this sort of thing would have had his leave stopped for the rest of the commission.'

It's three months now since I went ashore.

H. R. H.

LAYS OF LEARNING

THE CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

*He was the most forgetful man that ever walked this earth;
He couldn't make a will as he forgot what he was worth;
He forgot to smoke his pipe, or shave, or brush his hair, or sleep,
Or to summon, when he needed them, the doctor or the sweep,
If he ever dared in taxicab or bus or tram to roam,
He forgot his destination and the way to get back home;
He forgot to stamp his letters, he forgot to tie his tie,
He forgot to have his dinner and forgot the reason why;
He forgot what trumps at bridge were and did nothing but revoke;
When he lifted from a bunker he forgot to count a stroke;
If he played a game of cricket it was just the same with that—
When he went in for his innings he forgot to take his bat;
He bought a country house and then another one in Town,
But when given the addresses he forgot to write them down;
He forgot that he had purchased them and so he lived in neither;
He proposed to two young ladies but forgot to marry either;
He forgot to pay his income tax for years, and when the swine
Had him up in court and punished he forgot to pay the fine;
And that which really made his life exceptionally rotten
Was the fact that very often he forgot what he'd forgotten.*

Lays of Learning

*He read a magazine one day, in which he chanced to find
An advertisement relating to the training of the mind:
A Correspondence College absolutely guaranteed
To train imperfect memories for anyone in need.
There were questions to be answered, there were pamphlets to be read,
There were words to be repeated getting in and out of bed;
The treatment was so tonic, the promoters of it swore
They would bring his memory back and make it stronger than before;
For a fee of twenty guineas they would make his brain a force,
So he paid his twenty guineas but forgot to take the course.*

G. B.

As many as 228 demonstrators and 119 police were injured in the course of the Jeanne d'Arc fete in Paris. It is rumoured that the French intended to borrow our next General Strike and use it as a Bank Holiday. (26.5.26.)

THE POME HAWKER

Some time ago a hawker sold my wife a neat enamelled plate bearing the words 'NO HAWKERS'. I spent a Saturday afternoon screwing it on the gate. Like better men I have my off days with the screw-driver.

That warning acted like an insane charm. Where hawkers had come as single spies they swooped down in battalions. Soap, flowers, toothbrushes, lavender-bags, matches, notepaper, shirt buttons, pins, hooks—they jostled one another on the doorstep. Then, at first noiseless and unseen, came the Pome Hawker.

I found an envelope in the letter-box one morning. On it was written in a laboured hand:

'Price 2 pence the Author will call.'

Inside was a single printed sheet, from which with bulging eyes I read the following:

The Pome Hawker

'I WISH I WAS A SUNBEAM'

*I wish I was a Sunbeam
A-flashing from the sky
On man and child and woman
With bright and shining eye.
I wish I was a Sunbeam
To gaily dance and leap,
To brightly throw my radiance
Across the heavens so deep.'*

This kind of thing went on for five stanzas, the last concluding with these lines:

*'So it would be my mission
To give the weary rest,
To help the weak and sinful,
To cheer the good and blest.'*

'Price 2 pence only ladies and gentlemen please help an invalid which is his sole means of livelihood.'

Then I realized that the time had come when a stand must be made against these hawkers. The infliction, always a nuisance, had become intolerable. It must be ended.

It so happened that I answered the door myself when the Author called.

He was one of those short, fat, heavy-breathing men who have the appearance of being perpetually gorged to repletion. His face was shiny and mottled, he had a large ginger moustache, and his breath smelt prodigiously of beer. Anyone with less prospect of becoming a sunbeam it would be difficult to imagine.

'Goodmorninsir,' he said thickly. 'I left a pome 'ere, Sir, me own unaided composition and me sole means of livelihood. Price tupus only. I 'ope you liked it, Sir?'

'Like it!' I exclaimed. 'I consider it the very worst pome ever written.'

The Pome Hawker

'It's thort 'ighly of by many, Sir,' he answered stoutly. 'In fact, Sir, a lidy furver up the street 'as jest bought twelve copies to send to friends. What don't you like about it, Sir?'

'Anything,' I said. 'Everything. Go away and do something honest for a living.'

I fetched the pome, thrust it in his hand and closed the door firmly.

But next day there was another envelope in the letter-box bearing the inscription:

'Price 3 pence each the Author will call.'

This time there were two pomes. The first was headed 'True Service' and began:

*'To nobly and with stedfast heart
Serve all mankind,
That is what shows the man what has
A Christian mind.'*

I could read this no further. But with misguided curiosity I opened the second. Was it possible to plunge still deeper into banality. It was.

*'Look at the ant. See how it labours;
To do its utmost it does try,
A fine example, friends and neighbours,
For you and I.'*

The Pome Hawker waylaid me cleverly as I was entering the gate. I pointed to the enamelled plate.

'Can you read that?' I demanded sternly.

'I'm not a nawker, Sir, but a nauthor,' he replied proudly; and before I could recover he had got inside the gate and closed it behind him. 'I brought you them two other pomes, Sir,' he said, 'because I thort you might like 'em better. I picked 'em out speshul as bein' me best work.'

The Pome Hawker

'They were even worse than the other,' I cried hotly.

Sorry, Sir,' he said; 'but they're only sixpence, and that's nothin' to a gent like you.'

'As a matter of principle,' I bellowed, 'I would not give a farthing for them.'

By this time he had contrived to take up a commanding position on the doormat.

'Seeing as 'ow you don't care for literchoor, Sir,' he pleaded, 'won't you give me a little for the sake o' charity—just for a crust of bread and cheese, Sir?'

'Most certainly not!' I shouted. 'Not one farthing will you ever get out of me. Not one single farthing, you understand?'

I flung the pomes at his feet, slammed the door violently and retired in triumph. I had pulverized the Pome Hawker.

But the Pome Hawker won. All three poems were back in the letter-box the next day. On the envelope was written in the now familiar hand:

'With the Author's compliments. No charge.'

E. P. W.

SUNBEAM: A TRAGEDY

The story I have to tell is a hitherto unpublished tragedy of the Great Occupation which followed on the Great War, the Great Armistice and the Great Peace. It is the story of a flock robbed of its shepherd.

In those days I lived an innocent Arcadian life on the banks of the Rhine as a Brigade Education Officer. Between ourselves and our late foes all was brotherly (not to say sisterly) love. The only strife we knew was the noble emulation between comrade and comrade in the acquisition of knowledge. Presently we were to advance in open order in the strongly entrenched and cunningly defended Scholarships, Grants, Appointments and Jobs, which were to be the final objective of the soldier home from the wars, and

Sunbeam: A Tragedy

carry them on the entire front. In the meantime all was peace. And this peace was shattered by a horse.

Primarily, of course, like every disaster that occurs in the Army, it was the fault of a General. In the Mess one evening the Brigadier suddenly announced that he would shortly review the Brigade. Well, he had a right to do it if he wanted to, I thought vaguely, while revolving over in my mind the conjugations of *sein* and *haben* which I was to impart to my disciples on the morrow. Then another sentence struck on my ear: 'All officers attached to Brigade H.Q. will be on parade, mounted.' I am an officer, I thought with lightning rapidity; I am attached to Brigade H.Q.; therefore I must be on parade, mounted. And from that time onwards my *Ruh* was *hin*, as Goethe says, and my *Herz* was *schwer*.

It was not that I minded patronizing the Brigadier's review; in fact I was rather flattered by the invitation, which I accepted as a compliment to Learning as personified by myself. My agitation was caused by the word 'mounted'. I had never ridden a horse in civil life, and, having served during the whole of my combatant career as an infantry N.C.O., I had had no occasion to perform this feat in the Army; nor did it seem to me that a review would be the most suitable opportunity for beginning.

In any case I had no horse, and so the next day I went to see the Brigade Quartermaster on the subject. 'Don't you worry,' said he kindly; 'I've got the very horse for you. He only came to us a few days ago from Divisional H.Q., and for the last three or four years he's been ridden by the General himself. He's as quiet and steady as a rock; and then think how many reviews he must have been to. He knows the whole game; all you have to do is to sit on him as if you were in an arm-chair, and he'll pull you through.'

'What is his name?' I asked.

'Sunbeam,' said the Quarter. 'Come and look at him.'

Sunbeam looked very quiet and thoroughly respectable. I patted him, and he made no attempt to bite me or tread on me. Somewhat comforted I returned to my waiting disciples.

On the morning of the review, by arrangement with the Quartermaster, Sunbeam was brought round to the door of my billet by a

Sunbeam: A Tragedy

groom, who was charged to give me advice and assistance. On his instructions I placed my left foot in the stirrup, left hand on the horse's neck, right hand on the back of the saddle. I was then to give a spring with my right leg, helping myself with the right hand, and land neatly in the saddle. I must have pulled too hard with the right hand; anyhow the saddle, with myself clinging to it, disappeared under Sunbeam's stomach.

When we made our next attempt the groom hung on to things in general on the off side, and this time I really did land neatly in the saddle, although I say it myself. I kicked the groom smartly in the ear as I did so, but, being only a private, he could say nothing except 'Oo!'

Sunbeam certainly appeared to know the game, as the Quartermaster had said. The review-ground was in sight of my billet, and, seeing a group of mounted officers behind the General, he walked up to them without any reference to me for instructions and pushed his way through them until we were alongside the Brigadier himself. I took advantage of this to salute, but we were not well received. The Brigadier was annoyed; it seems that we were late, Sunbeam and I, and the march past was about to begin.

'Fall back a little,' he said crossly.

Before I had time to think out any way of conveying this to Sunbeam the band of the leading battalion struck up, and on the instant Sunbeam moved forward about three paces and proudly took his stand a little to the right and in front of the Brigadier's horse.

I realized the ghastly truth in an instant. Sunbeam had been in the habit of carrying a Divisional General; Sunbeam had therefore always occupied the place of honour at reviews, and Sunbeam had no idea of occupying any other place on this occasion. How was I to let him know that I was merely an Education Captain?

A horrible roar came from my left rear. 'Don't you know your position, Sir? Fall back immediately. Back, damn you, not forward!'

I hauled viciously on the right rein, then on the left, then on both together, bracing my feet in the stirrups and leaning back. Sunbeam paid no attention to me. He was engrossed in watching the troops. In a state of panic I looked round and addressed the Brigadier. 'I

Sunbeam: A Tragedy

can't, Sir,' I said hysterically. 'My horse—*my horse thinks I'm a General.*'

The Brigadier gave a sort of crackling snarl. 'Thinks you're a General, does he?' he said in a fierce undertone rendered tremulous by rage. 'Well, *I think you're a ——— fool.*'

So saying, he came forward half a dozen paces in order to pass Sunbeam and myself. The first battalion was almost opposite by this time, and he had to take the salute. Impossible to take the salute with an Education Captain sitting on a horse in front of him. He would deal with us afterwards.

He had reckoned without Sunbeam. That noble animal was not in the least disposed to permit such an affront to his dignity and that of the young General whom he fondly imagined to be riding him. Immediately and with great solemnity he took six paces forward in his turn, which brought us in front of the Brigadier again, and very near to the advancing Battalion, which was doing 'Eyes right!' before having received the order.

I closed my eyes and prepared for sudden death. I verily believed that out of the corner of my eye I had seen the Brigadier put his hand on his revolver, but I suppose he was deterred by the consideration that our corpses would be as much in the way as our living bodies. At all events he leaned forward and with his riding-whip gave Sunbeam a terrific welt on the hindquarters.

Apparently this was something quite outside Sunbeam's long experience of reviews. He did something—I don't know exactly what—which caused me to lose my stirrups and my reins, and rise up in the air. When I descended Sunbeam was no longer underneath me, and I came heavily to earth, flat on my back, in front of the Brigadier's horse.

Sunbeam was some distance away, kicking his heels. I walked off the ground in the opposite direction.

Within a week I received my demobilization papers. Was this a coincidence? I fear not.

R. P. M.

Marcus, The Man-Eating Fish

The franc is about one hundred and ninety to the pound and French ex-premiers are still one hundred and forty-four to the gross. (4.8.26.)

MARCUS, THE MAN-EATING FISH

Marcus has never actually tasted human flesh, but there is a look in his hungry china-blue eyes which says, 'If I were only a few sizes larger——' To make up for it Marcus has tasted everything else that he can come within tasting distance of—everything, that is to say, except one thing. And thereby hangs this tale. A week ago Marcus was the finest three inches of fighting fish that ever whipped its weight in wild sticklebacks. To-day he is a mere ghost of his former self. Baffled ambition, not a shortage of rations, is responsible for the malnutrition that has set in. Nothing short of a complete change of water will, we fear, save Marcus.

You will have read in your Natural History books that the ambition—nay, the life function, as they say at the British Association—of the adult male stickleback is to love, cherish and educate a mess of baby sticklebacks until such time as they are big enough to look after themselves. Not a dignified occupation for a man-eating fish, you might hastily conclude, but when you remember that a baby stickleback is looked upon as a sort of *hors d'oeuvre* by everything that swims, and that to keep even a proportion of them intact involves father stickleback in mortal combat—generally with an organism bigger than himself—about once every ten minutes, you will realize that the village horse-pond is strictly a place for heroes to live in.

Unfortunately the infant hands that transported Marcus from his weedy home to our aquarium failed to companion him with a female of the species, and try as we might for the ensuing weeks no female stickleback able and willing to make Marcus a proud father could be found anywhere. Under these circumstances Marcus did his best. Preparing a small hole in the sand he pretended that it was full of baby sticklebacks and swam round and round it, daring all and sundry to come on.

Marcus, The Man-Eating Fish

To come on at Marcus's invitation is to court trouble, and multitudinous were the hosts of bloodworms, shrimps, and infant minnows and what not that Marcus accounted for. The big water-beetle larva—a hideous brute with sickle-like mandibles which he uses to seize and suck dry his victims—grabbed Marcus by the hind end, a manoeuvre that had never failed with sticklebacks of smaller calibre; but Marcus tore loose with one magnificent sweep of his mighty tail, and, turning on his assailant, ripped him with his three formidable spines. The big dragon-fly larva that waited, head downward, on a stem of water-weed for three days before Marcus came within grabbing distance of his extensile face came to a like bad end. Even the nobby water-boatmen treated him with profound respect or contributed an odd flipper to his bill of fare.

All seemed to be going satisfactorily, and the imaginary brood of baby sticklebacks were getting to be quite big and adventurous fellows when the tragedy occurred. Somebody asked us to take care of a handsome pedigree fancy goldfish, quite a small one, but so fancy that the most ignorant goldfish fancier would have recognized in it a potential sweeper of the championship board. Its golden body was completely spherical; it was pop-eyed; it had a top-knot and twelve tails. It had no fins, but propelled itself through the water by a sort of rolling motion.

Little suspecting the trouble we were about to cause we dumped this little monster into the aquarium. Rolling its telescopic eyes and opening its vacuous mouth it immediately made a wobbly line for Marcus's imaginary family. But Marcus was on the watch. Though terrified out of his life by the apparition—it could hardly have been otherwise—he hurled himself at it, his blue eyes blazing carnivorously. Taken squarely by the ribs, the fancy goldfish, instead of gasping for breath as an ordinary goldfish would have done, simply rolled over and directed its course elsewhere.

Danger was averted, but the foe was by no means defeated. Since then Marcus has made a gallant attempt to kill and devour, or failing that, to devour without killing, the aureate monster about once every quarter of an hour, but without success. As the makings of a quick lunch a spherical fish with no particular equilibrial axis and

Marcus, The Man-Eating Fish

twelve enormous tails offers distinct disadvantages. The tails particularly bother Marcus. They swathe him about in voluminous folds, entirely spoiling his stroke and his temper. The fancy goldfish which, like many well-bred things, is essentially brainless, takes it all in good part, rolling its telescopic eyes and sucking in Marcus's figmentary progeny with apathetic indifference. I am afraid Marcus will have to go. We shall all miss him, but he is clearly determined to dine off fancy goldfish or perish of hunger, and the latter seems the more likely alternative. Besides, if he did achieve the physically impossible and by some super-zoological effort succeeded in ingesting his enemy, we should have some difficulty in giving a satisfactory account of our stewardship.

Later.—The difficulty has been solved by transferring the fancy goldfish to a pickle-jar. Marcus thinks he has swallowed it and is beginning to perk up. Already he has assimilated two bloodworms and an embryo mosquito. The veterinary surgeon says he will live.

C. H. B. (*Algol*)

We can obtain no confirmation of the rumour that the pain in Mlle Lenglen's arm which caused her retirement from the Lawn Tennis Championship, was due to writer's cramp. (7.7.26.)

SUMMER IN ARCADY

CALLERS

I was sitting in one of the latticed windows at Arcadia Cottage, idly watching a spider and wondering why people made such a fuss about Robert Bruce, when a noise outside attracted my attention.

'Angela,' I said, 'there's a cow in the garden.'

Angela joined me in the window and clutched my arm. While not *afraid* of cows, you understand, Angela does not exactly seek their company.

'Again!' she said in a tired sort of voice. 'That makes seven in three days.'

'Seven? Are you sure you haven't perhaps counted the same cow

Summer in Arcady

twice? This one, for instance, looks to me very like—er—Tuesday's cow. A return date, perhaps.'

'That doesn't matter,' said Angela; 'it's another visit, and you count every visit—like doctors.'

'And what course of treatment do you prescribe?'

'Shoosh it out, of course,' said Angela valorously. 'At least,' she added more pacifically, '*you* will.'

'But, my dear child, what on earth is the use of that? The gate won't stay shut, and there are eleven gaps in the fence as well.'

'Then you must mend them,' said Angela decisively. 'We can't have the estate simply overrun by cows and horses and—er—all sorts of animals,' vaguely suggesting the possibility of anything from elephants to dromedaries. 'This one's eaten a row of lettuces and half the nasturtiums already.'

'Fond of salad perhaps.'

'Well, go on,' said Angela; 'shoosh it.'

'One moment,' I said; 'before we proceed to extreme measures—that is, shooshing—let us try what persuasion will do.'

I tapped loudly on the window.

'Hi! You!'

The cow looked up languidly.

'Good cow,' I shouted soothingly. '*Good* old cow, then.'

The cow stared as if unable to believe its ears; I imagine no one can ever have spoken to it like that before.

'There you are,' I said triumphantly, turning again to Angela. 'You see what kindness does. In another moment that cow will feel thoroughly ashamed of itself and will turn and walk straight out of the garden, taking care not to step on a single flower-bed. Remember, nothing is ever gained by violence.'

I turned again to the window. The cow was still regarding me with a puzzled look in its eyes. I pointed to the gate.

'*Good* cow,' I called in a friendly, thoroughly conciliatory tone. 'Gate—*there's* a good cow.'

At this point I regret to say the cow sneered, glanced at the sky, decided it was going to rain, and sat down on a promising clump of gladioli, discouraging it for ever.

Summer in Arcady

We are all of us human, and I admit that this roused me. I had tried conciliation and it had failed; it was time for more drastic action. Besides, Angela was sniggering.

'Very well,' I said sternly. 'If you refuse voluntarily to go and stand knee-deep in lush grass, where, according to all the accepted canons of æsthetics, you belong, you shall be made to,' and, seizing a stout stick, I sallied forth to the attack.

I was never intended by nature for a toreador. It was an exhausting business, in which the flower-beds suffered considerably more than the cow. But in the end superior intelligence triumphed and I shut the gate with a sigh of relief. It opened again at once.

But I was not to be thwarted by an inanimate gate after having circumvented a particularly animate cow. I tied the gate securely with my pocket-handkerchief and returned to Angela.

She met me at the door.

'There are three sheep in the orchard,' she said.

I was still exalted with the fierce joy of battle and I turned at once towards the orchard. There is nothing like continuing the offensive whilst the blood is up.

'Are you going to reason with them first?' asked Angela, a shade too innocently.

'No,' I said, 'everyone knows that sheep are not amenable to reason. They are a lower order of creation than cows—if possible.'

'Oh,' said Angela.

As a matter of fact these sheep were not amenable to anything. I cajoled, persuaded and worried them in the direction of one gap after another, and each time they turned off at the last moment and huddled against the securely fastened gate.

'Very well,' I said, untying the handkerchief and setting the gate wide open. I am kindly by nature and will accommodate even sheep if I can.

But in the meantime the sheep had strolled quietly through a gap and were peacefully cropping the grass by the roadside.

'Look out!' called Angela from the window, where she sat enthroned like a Queen of Beauty watching a tourney.

I reached the gate again just in time to wring a piercing squeal

Summer in Arcady

from an itinerant pig by slamming it upon its tail. But unfortunately both the squeal and the pig were inside the garden.

A pig doesn't *look* the most agile of all four-footed things, but I think it extremely probable that it is. In addition it is possessed of a vast store of low cunning; you have only to look at its eyes to realize that. This particular pig (one of the original Gadarene swine and possessed of a devil) appeared to have no dearer object in life than to make of me a local laughing-stock. As far as Angela is concerned it succeeded.

Nothing seemed to please it. It would respond neither to endearments (and there are times when it is hard, *very* hard, to speak kindly to a pig) nor to curses. It seemed to be leading me on and enjoying it. Time and again I was on the point of victory, and then with a wicked leer and a peculiarly offensive flick of its tail it eluded me. I have never been a cowboy, but that afternoon I developed such skill with a lasso that it moved even Angela to admiration.

In the end brains again told. I got rid of it at last by laying a tempting trail of acorns to the gate, calmly sacrificing what might one day have been a noble avenue of oak trees. It is only born strategists, as I pointed out to Angela, who can take these terrible decisions without flinching.

Angela and I like company, but there are limits to our hospitality. That pig has worn out its welcome in one visit, and there have been others. Angela called at the neighbouring farm on our first morning, and her call was returned the same afternoon by a dog and half a dozen hens. Cats abound, and I was visited in bed last night by an undoubted earwig and two spiders.

I shall have to mend those gaps. This may not have much effect upon the spiders, but it should keep some of the larger local fauna at a distance. Otherwise we look like being crowded out of Arcadia Cottage before we are properly settled in.

And I don't mind spiders much. Compared with that pig I can feel almost affectionate towards them; they are a very peaceful folk on the whole.

L. du G. P.

Simple Stories

This new Charleston seems to have been invented by a Scotsman who was trying to keep his foot on a sixpence in a crowded ball-room. (24.11.26.)

SIMPLE STORIES

THE ROBBER

One day Milly Fairbrother was going for a walk with her nurse Gladys Conk when they met a robber in a wood.

The robber said give me some money and Gladys Conk said how much money?

He said a shilling, and she said I haven't got a shilling, and he said yes you have.

She said well at any rate I shan't give it to you, and he said if you don't I shall kill you.

Milly was frightened at that but Gladys Conk was not frightened. She said you can't do that, and he said why not? and she said because I shall kill you first.

The robber laughed at that and said oh you will will you? and she said yes I will will I.

The robber laughed again and said that's good, what with? and she said with my umbrella.

Now Milly's mother had given Gladys Conk a new umbrella for a Christmas present. It had a duck's head on the handle made of imitation silver and she always took it for walks with her, and it was a good thing she did because of the robber.

The robber's face assumed a ghastly hue and he said I never thought of that, and Gladys Conk said well you can think of it now.

So Gladys Conk killed the robber and he had a lovely funeral with arum lilies and Milly was allowed to go to it.

Well the next day a policeman came to the back door and asked for Gladys Conk.

The cook opened the door because she was just going out to get a chicken to make some chicken-broth for Milly. Milly was in bed with a sore throat that morning, but she was better the next day and

Simple Stories

got up, and her friend Jean Hale came to tea with her and they played with the animals in her Noah's Ark.

So the cook said do come in and sit down, and he came in and sat down, and she gave him some beefsteak-and-kidney pie which she had made for lunch upstairs, but she said they can have some cold meat, it won't do them any harm. And she gave him some stout which she had paid for out of her wages.

When he had eaten half the pie and drunk all the stout he said where is Gladys Conk?

The cook said what do you want with Gladys Conk? and he said ah you may well ask.

The cook said she is busy ironing and she doesn't want to have anything to do with policemen she is too young.

And he said she is not too young for me and the judge wants to see her about having a trial.

She said what for? and he said for killing the robber.

The cook said oh, and he said ah you may well say oh.

So she said well I'll go and fetch her.

So they had a trial and the judge was a very kind man and he liked Gladys Conk because he had had a little girl of his own called Gladys, but she was grown up now and *she* had a little girl called Gladys Mary. And the judge had sent her a book of poetry for her birthday and she had learnt three pieces in it. And two of her aunts had given her two fountain-pens one for black ink and one for red, and one of the mistresses of the school she went to had borrowed the one for red ink to correct exercises with.

So the judge said to Gladys Conk don't be frightened, and she said no I won't.

And he said that's right why did you kill the robber?

She said well wouldn't you? And he said yes I would.

So the judge gave Gladys Conk a watch which he paid for out of his own money, and afterwards she married the policeman and had several wedding presents. She loved him rather but he was aggravating, and the cook said of course everybody could please themselves but she wouldn't have married him herself not if he had been the only man in the world.

Simple Stories

They had six children, five girls and one little policeman, and when Milly went to tea with her she had brown bread and butter with apricot jam and macaroons and was allowed to bath the baby.

A. M.

BE A LITTLE MAN

It happened on the Undercliff Drive, at Bournemouth. Nurse had only just stopped to rest, for the pram was heavy, the Rolls-Royce of prams indeed, and the serial in *Home Echoes* was just too thrilling. The dark-haired villain had just locked the bedroom door when Bobby started to whimper. She let him whimper while the villain clasped the heroine roughly by the waist.

'Be quiet, Bobby!'

But Bobby wouldn't be quiet.

'Don't be a baby,' she scolded; 'be a little man.'

Bobby ceased to whimper and fixed a penetrating eye on her. Nurse gasped, for his gaze had lost its happy baby expression. It was a face as old as the hills, with little crows'-feet at the corner of its eyes.

'Well,' Bobby snapped in a dry shrill voice, 'are we to stay here all night? When you're quite ready, my girl.'

This from a baby whose vocabulary consisted of ten words, most of which could only be distinguished by his mother.

Nurse slowly propelled the Rolls-Royce of prams.

'Not that way, damn you!' said Bobby with great distinctness.

'Bobby!' she almost screamed. 'You naughty boy! Mustn't use such wicked words.'

'Go to blazes,' said the baby, chuckling quietly. 'Don't be so milk-and-watery, girl. Bless you, you're not so innocent when you're off duty. I've seen you, you baggage.'

'One more word from you, Master Bobby, and home you go.'

'I'll not go home. Take me where I can get a drink.'

'Why, you've just had your milk.'

'Milk! Did you say milk? I've a throat like a lime-kiln and you talk of milk.'

Be a Little Man

'Don't be naughty, darling. Where can you have picked up these naughty words?'

'Where can I pick up a good drink?'

'Oh, what do you want?'

'Special Scotch—at once.'

An elderly short-sighted gentleman peered at the contents of the pram.

'There's nothing quite so fresh and charming as an English baby. Hello, Baby Bunting!'

'Hello yourself, old cock!' was the surprising response. 'What's going to win the two-thirty?'

The short-sighted gentleman fled.

Nurse sat down and wept.

'Whatever's come to the poor lamb? Whatever will his mother say when she comes to see me bath him?'

'Bath me?' snapped Bobby. 'Do you mean that a parcel of women mean to bath me? This is a conspiracy, a conspiracy, you—you slut. In another minute I'll get out and walk.'

'You—you can't walk. You—you haven't been learnt.'

'Taught, girl, taught.'

'T—taught, yes, Sir. I don't know what's come over me.'

'Neither do I. Stop snivelling. In my young days young girls never snivelled. You've no self-control. Have you got a match on you? What have you done with my cigar-case?'

'Oh, he's gone right out of his mind! I shall be blamed for it and I've done nothing except have a peep at a book.'

'That's right, my girl,' said the baby eagerly. 'Cultivate the mind. It needs it. What's that you're reading? Muck! Throw it away. You're no fit companion for a man of my years.'

'Year, Bobby. A year come next Tuesday fortnight.'

'Why can't you say the 19th *prox.*? Come along, wench. Put your best leg forward. Ha! ha! Not bad, either of 'em.'

'You make me blush for shame, Master Bobby. Do be good.'

'Hold your tongue, girl.'

'Be a good little baby, Bobby,' she sobbed.

The features relaxed and the crows'-feet round his eyes filled out.

Be a Little Man

'Gug! Gug!' he cried, kicking lustily.
A retired colonel stopped to look at him.
'Fine little ma——' he began.
'Hush!' said Nurse fiercely.

W. E. R.

A statue recently exhibited of a mother with a child in her arms is said to be very modern. Then why isn't she nursing a small dog instead. (22.12.26.)

THE ESCALATOR

(A Christmas Shopping Tragedy)

*Oh, listen whilst the tale I tell
Of how—life happens so—
I came across my Amabel,
My loved of long ago.*

*We met—one passing glimpse, no more;
We stood, but might not stay;
The inevitable onrush bore
Our fleeting lives away.*

*We met; 'twas in a world of cares
Each burdened by a load;
We met upon the moving stairs
At Tottenham Court Road.*

*We met with no renewed delight
Our wandering ways to crown,
For she stood on the upward flight
While I stood on the down.*

*We stood in silence like two ships;
We made no facial sign;
She held her ticket in her lips
And I my pipe in mine.*

The Escalator

*We made no gestures that might bring
The old dead years alive;
I had twelve parcels tied with string,
And she had seventy-five.*

*Wedged tight as mortal souls may be
Where none may start nor stir,
My Amabel rolled up to me
And I rolled down to her.*

*Mutely I stood, with straining eyes
That bridged the gulf between,
Whilst she went upward to the skies
Conveyed by the machine.*

*My Amabel! the same, unchanged—
Except, of course, her clothes—
Since those fond days when we arranged
To plight our mutual troths.*

*My Amabel! the same, the same!
No doubt the glorious hair,
Though less of it since shingling came,
Substantially was there.*

*The same two orbs, the lustrous deeps
On which my soul had fed,
Were there; and I remembered heaps
Of things that we had said.*

*Did she remember too what was,
What had been, but had died?
One could not tell, of course, because
Her face was occupied.*

The Escalator

*I reached the foot, I fought like hell,
I scaled the ascendant track;
And half-way up, lo! Amabel
Came lightly rolling back.*

*She too had seen, she too desired
To tell me for my good
Where, since the old days had expired,
We two precisely stood.*

*One distant cold salute she gave;
I raised my hard felt-hat;
The untiring staircase, wave by wave,
Went on, and that was that.*

*Once more we turned, once more we passed,
Each to our several train;
I looked the third time and the last—
She froze me with disdain.*

E. V. K. (*Evoe*)

A County Court Judge has expressed his opinion that a man is entitled to fight occasionally. This is good news for heavyweight champions. (5.1.27.)

SWEETHEARTS AND WIVES

*The very first voyage as ever I made
I went to sea in the East Coast trade,
And I courted a gal at Seaton Sluice—
If her name warn't Lizzie it must ha'
been Luce—
So I did!*

Sweethearts and Wives

*And then I signed in a Colonies clipper
With a rare old rip of a racing skipper.
And there warn't no sense nor there warn't no use
A-courtin' a gal at Seaton Sluice;
So I looked for another down Melbourne way—
If her name warn't Kitty it must ha' been May—
So I did!*

*Oh, next I sailed in a pearlin' brig
To the South Sea Isles both little and big.
Where it weren't no use, say what you may,
A-courtin' a gal down Melbourne way;
So I didn't worry with her no longer,
But I soon picked up with a gal in Tonger,
An island gal as brown as a berry—
Don't know her name, but I called her 'Cherry'—
So I did!
(And so on ad lib.)*

*But last I signed in a Liverpool liner—
Go where you will and you won't find a finer!—
And it's time, thinks I, to be settling down,
So I married a widder in Monkeytown,
With a bit in the bank and a 'corner-off'
And when I'm ashore now I lives like a toff.
And as for the girl at Seaton Sluice
I'ope she ain't waitin', for that ain't no use,
And as for the ones at Montreal
And Tonger and Taltal and Melbourne and all
And all the whole boilin' from France to Fiji,
I'ope they're all married and 'appy like me—
So I do!*

C. F.-S.

The New Chivalry

THE NEW CHIVALRY

Babette has bought a motor-bicycle. Not for her husband; that would have been quite a womanly thing to do, and would have met with my entire approval. No, it is for herself—Babette, who cannot even do the running repairs of her own sewing-machine and who puts my typewriter out of order every time she uses it. My strongly expressed disapproval had no effect whatever. (Yes, as you guessed, I am Babette's husband.)

A week ago she came into my study attired in corduroy breeches and coat, with a fascinating little leather bonnet tied over her shingled hair. I told her what I thought of her looks (for which I got the usual reward). I hadn't the heart to tell her what I thought of her behaviour, knowing that I should probably never see her alive again. Then she took me down to the gate to watch her start. Her instructor, a handsome young man of whom I thoroughly disapproved from the start, showed her some handles with uncouth names, explained how the thing started and how, with luck, it might be stopped, and said he would run by her side while she learnt to ride.

With a heavy heart I saw them turn the corner, Babette well ahead.

Ten minutes later the young man reappeared, alone, pale and dishevelled.

'An ambulance?' My shaking lips almost refused to utter the words.

'A push-bike,' he gasped.

I smiled grimly. I was glad he was suffering too. It was some consolation for a morning wasted. I gave him a push-bike, and I presume he caught Babette up, as she returned two hours later safe and radiant. She brought the young man back to lunch, having discovered, intuitively, I suppose, that he and her brother had hobbled at Ypres.

For six forenoons Babette took lessons, and the seventh she went out alone. She still knew nothing whatever about machinery. That very day I found her sitting in the garage with two oilstoves and three lamps alight round the motor-bicycle. She told me that her

The New Chivalry

instructor had told her to warm the engine up a bit before starting. (He also told her to suck in a little petrol; but this she felt she could not do, and I didn't blame her. It must have a filthy taste.) Well, I helped her to flood the sparking plug, pushed her for a hundred yards or so, and off she went.

At my earnest request she went along the road through the pine-wood, where the traffic is almost negligible. Perhaps this was a mistake, as when the bicycle stopped of its own accord she was in a lone part of the wood, and it was a long time before a young man came along in a car and rescued her. After a careful examination he said that it would not be necessary to dismantle the engine, which Babette was on the point of doing. He gave her some petrol and promised to come to tea.

The next day, at my earnest request, Babette went along the Bath Road, where there are more people about. All went well for a mile or so, and then *such a nice man* (these italics are *not* mine), spent half an hour cleaning the carburettor and accepting an invitation to lunch. As a matter of fact there were two young men that day, one for the carburettor and one for the sparking plug. They are both coming to lunch.

I thought perhaps the country road would be cheaper in the long run, and Babette acquiesced. The next day she met General Fitzcuthbert. He managed to persuade the bicycle to run along the levels and pushed it up the hills. Of course he is coming to lunch, but that I don't mind as he is an old friend.

The next day Babette got as far as the public school which her younger brother honours with his patronage. Thirty-one boys from the upper school helped her to get the engine going again. Luckily for me they are not allowed to accept invitations to lunch.

Two days later I was out when she failed to start on her morning's run. Fortunately, or unfortunately, our garage is close to the gate and a passing motorist noticed her. He is dining with us to-night.

Now this sort of thing cannot go on. Neither can I stop it. Babette will never learn to manage that motor-bicycle. She is constitutionally incapable of grasping any mechanical principle. She just rides until something goes wrong and then waits; and my

The New Chivalry

banking account won't run to all these meals. Also, worn out with anxiety and with saying good-bye-for-the-last-time to Babette, I cannot write, and our sole source of income is drying up.

I hope this article will be published, as that would pay for some of the meals. Also I want to save up for a two-seater.

G. G. S.

The detachment of Royal Marines which left Portsmouth last week for China took with them all modern weapons including Lewis guns and a jazz band of saxophones. (2.2.27.)

WINTER WARFARE

EXAMINATIONS

Having touched upon the question of Military Lectures it is essential that I should deal with Military Examinations, for the one would be of no consequence without the other. Indeed it is questionable which were introduced first, which are the cause and which the effect, which the hen and which the egg.

Those who affirm that a written examination can be no test of conduct under war conditions cannot have realized what rapid strides have been made recently towards the perfection of question-paper technique. To begin with, the examiners, a genial but legally minded body of enthusiasts, many of whom began life in the Army, have discovered that the fog of words is just as baffling as the fog of war. In fact to find one's way about certain papers it is necessary to possess an unerring eye for country and a pronounced bump of locality. Many candidates have been found disconsolate at the end of the allotted time, not because they were unable to answer any of the questions, but because they had not yet succeeded in finding any questions to answer. Happily this deception is seldom practised, but other devices calculated to shake the candidate's nerve and so to undermine his *morale* are in constant use. They are:

(1) *The opening instructions*, some of which are very simple, some

Winter Warfare

complicated and some contradictory. A nervous candidate can be relied upon to waste a good deal of precious time in searching for hidden meanings that do not exist.

(2) The '*painting of the picture*'. The object of this, according to the examiners (many of whom, I forgot to mention, possess a keen but mischievous sense of humour) is to enable the candidate to 'visualize the situation'. In practice it leaves him wondering which side he is on and why he ever joined the Army.

(3) *The element of surprise* (very important and permitted in any sort of war) is effected by firing off the actual questions suddenly, like stars out of a Roman candle, while a pleasant undercurrent of verbal golden rain dribbles on placidly. Further, a question on, say geography may be followed by one on influenza or sandbags, tactics, cost accounting, modern languages or machine-guns.

(4) *The examination map* is a very special one. It is considerably larger than the allotted desk and is covered with names, none of which is mentioned in the paper. (The paper is also full of names, none of which is mentioned on the map.) The scale and legend are, of course, or might as well be, in Persian or Zulu.

In addition,

(5) *The judicious misprint*, and

(6) *The occasional cipher message* are invaluable fog-producing agents.

Here is the kind of thing:

WAR

(written.)

Part One.

First Paper (a).

(a)

A 28/215 (Q). Wt 23714—5117/1543. 2,000. 11/26.

G.P. & Co., Ltd. G.S. 42y W.O. W.D.

Slide-Rules may be used.

Time allowed—one hour.

Reference Special Sheet 'Waziritania' (6 sagines to the verst) issued with this paper.

Winter Warfare

Read these instructions carefully.

Unless you are not

‘A person subject to Military Law’

do not make any mention of the fact, except in the case of service units other than regulars and those abroad, unless temporarily, less India and other overseas stations, if not already serving, provided that in all other cases you

WRITE YOUR NUMBER (if any) IN THE
SPACE INDICATED.

USE BOTH SIDES OF THE PAPER ONLY.

DO NOT MAKE BLOTS IN THE MARGIN.

NARRATIVE.

Great Britain and Pinkland are at war. An indecisive fleet action was fought in the Sargasso Sea yesterday, and our troops were landed on enemy territory during the night. The inhabitants are hostile, but they have no tanks or aeroplanes; these and the rest of the army are in full flight. The troops are now having breakfast and the officers are settling down to their correspondence and returns. Dawn is at 0600 hours and ‘Lights Out’ at 2215. The ground is flat in places, but otherwise hilly. None of the rivers, railways or bridges shown on the map exist. ‘Xplogm bfaknn ojpzac.’ Who said this, and why? Discuss the effect of its application to the training of the Dominion Forces, illustrating your answer with a sketch-map of Canada and a reference to the strategy of the second Punic War.

NARRATIVE (*continued.*)

The undergrowth (if any) is thick, and is more passable for small soldiers than for large ones. The borogroves are mimsy after the recent heavy rains. Until the fog lifts the visibility is poor. At 0430 hours you are at point 431 with your platoon. It is dark and rain is falling. You have just placed your Sergeant-Major in close arrest, and your Company-Commander has gone absent without leave. An orderly brings you a message written with copying-pencil on this paper informing you that a large force of all arms is massing at the second 6 in Hill 1666 and that you are to move at once to the valley

Winter Warfare

400 yards due north and prepare it for all-round defence. The signature, date, place and hour have all dissolved. Before you have time to question the orderly he has an epileptic fit.

Appreciate the situation in Cape Dutch or Esperanto, giving reasons for your opinions, and discuss the use of Boronoff's occipital reaction by a platoon-commander in cases of local paralytic spasmodic. Mark on the map your position at 0930 hours, and write out the message you would send to the Adjutant.

I. S. O. P.

From the Registrar-General's latest return it is deduced that the end of the surplus of women is in sight. Some of us men may yet live to get a seat in a Tube. (9.3.27.)

SOME HOUNDS

*The Pekinese, to keep him quiet,
Should have a soporific diet;
They say that gorgonzola cheese
Is fatal to a Pekinese.*

*The Griffon will be out to kill us
If we so much as breathe 'Bacillus';
The word makes all the hair stand stiff on
The back of every loyal Griffon.*

*The Aberdeen, in quitting life,
Is sometimes said to leave his wife
A widow, which, from what I've seen,
Is generous, for an Aberdeen.*

*The Terrier can never stand
Intruders on his master's land;
I've known a blameless boy-blackberrier
Fearfully mangled by a Terrier.*

Some Hounds

*The Dachshound finds the noisy brawl
Intrigues him little if at all;
The melodies of Grieg and Bach sound,
More attractive to the Dachshound.*

*The Sealyham will not refuse
To share your breakfast if you choose;
Yet, swallowed never so genteelly, ham
Does not agree with every Sealyham.*

*The Whippet, lucky little tyke,
Enjoyed himself throughout the strike;
Although the country felt the nip, it
Was most delightful for the Whippet.*

*The Mastiff normally benignant,
Is rather rough when he's indignant;
It's best to run extremely fast if
Pursued by an indignant Mastiff.*

*Retrievers are a noble breed,
They're very cautious indeed;
The vulgar game of spotting beavers
Was not indulged in by Retrievers.*

*The Cocker Spaniel, silly mug,
Is very like a woolly rug;
So rugs, when they emit uncanny yells,
Are usually Cocker Spaniels.*

E. E. N.-B.

SOMEWHERE IN VAR

'What a beautiful dog!' cried Natasha.
It seemed to be something between a pointer and a setter, gaunt
and large.

Somewhere in Var

Mrs. Enderby asked the waiter its name.

'Marcou Isabel,' he said.

Perhaps he did not really say that. He had a bill in his mouth at the time and was running along under the shelter of a large fish, as though it had been an umbrella. But Marcou Isabel was good enough for us.

'He looks awfully hungry, poor chap,' said Enderby.

Marcou Isabel lay down near the wall, and regarded us with a gleaming eye.

Let it be frankly admitted that your tourist is a glutton. Dinner and lunch mean a great deal more to him than they do at home. We had travelled to the hotel of the Lighthouse simply and solely to eat a *bourride*. The kind French gentleman at the Paradise of Flowers had said that unless we had eaten a *bourride* at the Hotel of the Lighthouse we had not lived. We all of us felt at once that this would be a historical calamity.

In speaking of the *bourride*, the kind French gentleman had raised his eyes to heaven, or where heaven would have been if it had not been intercepted by the foliage of a magnificent pepper tree. We should be filled, he said, with a satisfaction incredible.

We took a motor-car to the Hotel of the Lighthouse the very next day.

Greedy. But Enderby, when I said so, defended our position with a good deal of plausibility.

'The recollections of art and archaeology,' he pointed out, 'or indeed of natural scenery, wherever one travels, are the same for all. They establish no intimate bond with one's fellow travellers that is not common to the world. You can even get them from the guide-books without travelling at all. But in a meal there is certain to be some slight difference, even if it is only in the choice of the *hors d'œuvre*. Thus a man will say to his wife, "You remember the exquisite flavour of that omelette we had at Chartres?" when as likely as not the spire and the rose-windows arouse no finer tribute from them than is found in the encyclopædia.'

'I think he is right,' I said. 'I remember at Fiesole——'

'Don't let him, *please*,' implored Natasha.

Somewhere in Var

'I remember at Fiesole,' I repeated firmly, 'that far stronger than the impression made by the Roman amphitheatre and the view over Florence, or even by the fact that I lost my tobacco pipe, is the recollection of how we sat and waited for lunch under a tree covered with *fiori di maggio*, confronted by an enormous flask of chianti, which, so hot and dusty was the day——'

But at this point the waiter arrived with the *bourride*.

It was no trivial pomp. Served in three parts and resting on an enormous mound of potatoes and herbs, lay what looked like a young shark. Mrs. Enderby said it was a *loup-de-mer*. Perhaps it was. But it had suffered a land change. Beside it the waiter placed an immense tureen filled apparently with milk, on the surface of which the *chef* had caused to navigate a flotilla of oblong pieces of bread. There appeared to be about enough sustenance to feed a foundling school. We were each given two plates, one of them a soup plate, to help us in coping with all this treasure of the earth and salvage of the sea. Somehow it was extraordinarily good.

Nobody having the courage to use two plates at once, we kept mixing the ingredients in the soup plate, now a piece of shark, now a pound or so of potatoes, and now a ladleful of milk and bread. There seemed to be fennel in the milk, and perhaps other things.

No one spoke much during the voyage.

All was over, and we were struggling, as it were, to harbour again when a terrible thing occurred, the thing which we had forgotten or perhaps never foreseen. The sea wrack had hardly been removed when our waiter arrived bringing in copious quantities *entrecôte* of veal.

We looked at each other with glassy eyes.

It was at this moment that Marcou Isabel stole silently from his corner and sat down near the table, his muzzle exactly on a level with the cloth, and, raising his huge right paw, laid it sympathetically on Enderby's arm. He might have been a dog from the machine.

'We must be very careful and do it when the waiter's back is turned,' said Natasha, while Mrs. Enderby selected the largest available spoon. There were several looking-glasses in the room and the waiter was a soft-footed man. Time after time we were almost

Somewhere in Var

caught in the guilty act, but Marcou Isabel was never at fault. One swift silent motion of the jaw, not the vestige of a bite, and portion by portion the veal disappeared. The late shark, dragged for us from the Mediterranean, might have envied him his *vitesse*. And if the server faltered for a moment there fell at once upon his shoulder the dignified reminder of Marcou Isabel's paw.

It was not only the veal. He did yeoman service for us with the bread and the cream-cheese, to refuse which would also, so it appeared, have broken the waiter's heart.

'I wonder,' said Enderby, sipping meditatively, 'whether we oughtn't to offer him a glass of wine.'

During the coffee Marcou Isabel slipped quietly away. He left us still bemused by a sense of rosy well-being that but for him might have been the coma of incapacity and despair.

'Reverting to what you said about Chartres,' I said to Enderby, 'I am inclined to think that we shall take away a purer and nobler reminiscence from this morning's sightseeing than we could have got by visiting any monuments of antiquity and art. Not only shall we have the haunting memory of the *bourride* ever with us to recall the sight of this little maritime town basking in the sun——'

'And gently fanned by the mistral,' said Mrs. Enderby, gazing at the dust that was blowing along the quay.

'But,' I continued rhetorically, 'we shall also be able to remind ourselves that, like boy scouts, we did here one noble deed. We gave nourishment to a starving dog.'

Enderby rapped the table with an appreciative spoon. We rose to go.

As we left the Hotel of the Lighthouse we noticed another party of the English, sitting at a table near the door. There were three women and three men. Their faces were a little flushed, but they seemed happy and well. There was being borne away from them, its naked spars sticking into the air, the hulk of some great sea animal and a huge half-empty tureen. As the waiter left the table, Marcou Isabel, emerging from some unseen lair, strolled casually down the room.

'What a splendid-looking dog!' said one of the English ladies.

Somewhere in Var

'Looks hungry, poor beggar,' said one of the Englishmen.

We loitered a little. In a moment the waiter appeared again, bearing on high some sort of steaming *ragout*. As he set it down on the table one of the ladies gave a slight start. The rest of the party gazed at each other with sad bewildered eyes.

'Good heavens!' muttered one of them, emitting something between groan and a sigh.

Marcou Isabel, who had just sat down, placed upon the visitor's arm a quiet encouraging paw.

E. V. K. (*Evoe*)

Some of the clouds in a remarkable sunset seen in London recently were described as resembling the *Daily Mail* rose in colour. Only one newspaper mentioned this. (4.5.27.)

JUST THE REVERSE

It was not I who gave Brenda the little motion-picture outfit, and I disclaim all responsibility for what followed.

Her first film, starring my mother-in-law, proved quite an artistic production. It was a short drama of suburban life, in which the heroine was seen to stroll sedately towards our standard rose, stoop gracefully and imbibe the fragrance of its single blossom. The whole thing was directed in the most masterly and convincing manner. When my wife later projected it on to a dust-sheet, her mother seemed very much gratified, remarking that it proved that she still possessed some of her youthful agility. I think that was the only mistake Brenda made; the little handle should have been turned much slower.

Somehow Lady Bloggs must have learnt of my wife's acquisition, for we received a crested invitation to the marriage of her youngest daughter. It was arranged that Brenda should be granted the sole cinema rights of the wedding. Moreover, providing we could influence our local chemist to develop the film immediately, there was

Just the Reverse

to be an exclusive *première* before the guests at the Hall the very same evening.

On the appointed day my wife and I took up our position at the bottom of the church steps.

'We must be inside when the bride comes,' she said as she screwed the tiny camera on its tripod. 'I think I'll use half of the film on the bridegroom and the other half on the happy pair leaving after the ceremony.'

We did not have long to wait for the arrival of young Rex Harrington. He was quite a nice harmless sort of chap, and it seemed a shame to make him face the lens at such a moment. He moved nervously up the path, a fixed vacuous smile marring his very passable features; then, stumbling slightly over the two stone steps, he pulled himself together and strode resolutely into the church.

'Got him beautifully,' chirruped Brenda, who is insensible to the finer tragedies of life. We hid the camera behind a flying buttress and took our places inside the church.

Just before the close of the ceremony we slipped out quietly and once more took up our stand. Brenda turned steadily as the young couple emerged arm-in-arm. Both wore beatific smiles, making a perfect picture of (so far untried) marital harmony. A few moments later we were hurrying to the reception *via* the chemist.

The chemist was true to his promise, and at seven prompt all the guests were assembled in front of the screen.

The opening was not in accordance with expectations. We were first shown the couple arm in arm, smiling delightfully upon their numerous friends. It made rather an original scene, for, while they themselves were walking fearlessly backwards, confetti were streaming from their persons in cascades. Miraculously sorting themselves out in mid-air, they were caught in neat bunches by clutching hands thrown out just at the right moment. It was really most impressive.

None of the audience spoke. I think the unusual behaviour of these confetti rather took our breath away. Still smiling, the young couple bowed themselves backwards up the steps and vanished into the church. The bridegroom, however, quickly reappeared. Backing resolutely out again, a little fast perhaps, he stumbled, not un-

Just the Reverse

naturally, over the two stone steps and moved nervously down the path. Since he was backing away from us, we could see his face; a fixed vacuous smile marred his very passable features.

The hum of the machine ceased abruptly. The great film had been shown.

We took our leave of Lady Bloggs soon afterwards, my wife being anxious to get home. In view of her experience I must agree that the outlook scarcely seems encouraging for the all-British production.

M. L.

MORE JACKDAW IN GEORGIA

THE DOWNPOUR

(After Mr. G. K. Chesterton)

*It may be that the mightiness of kings
Is lewdness on the lips of half the world;
It may be that man's faith is torn in strings
And Love's bright banner miserably furled;
But deep in Sussex there's a crown of gorse,
And in a raftered parlour Sussex ale;
And on a Wiltshire upland a white horse
Stands staunchly that our sins may not prevail.*

*Not for me the pallid drinks
That grocers stand to milliners;
While the sun in heaven winks
Ale shall have its ministers—
Sussex ale in Sussex inns,
Drinks all round and song begins.*

*The lute and lyre are cracked or laid aside;
Glad minstrels dwindle to a cheap revue
Where syncopated scraps of ditties sighed
In simpler years are shuffled up anew;
But deep in Bucks men sit about a board*

More Jackdaw in Georgia

*And roar old songs and drink and sing again;
And bacchic Battersea knows sweet accord
In mellowed nooks browned dark with barley-stain.*

*Not for me the pallid songs
That grocers pipe to milliners,
But noisy tumult of hoarse throngs,
Lords of hay and kings of furze;
English songs in English inns
And a great warmth in the heart begins.*

*Maybe the creaking earth is overtired
And man's proud destiny obscured and faint,
But there's a drink to which one man aspired,
A cup for beggar, millionaire and saint;
The liquid skies, the reeling winds and rains,
The rainbow's lyric miracle of light
Which timid men with bowlers on their brains
Shut out with black umbrellas in affright.*

*Not for me the pallid skies
That grocers paint for milliners,
But lightning-riven, thunderwise,
Rains a-race with silver spurs;
One man far from honest inns
And a great thirst in the soul begins.*

W. K. S.

A Mexican rebel General is now in Chicago on a holiday. We presume he has gone there for the shooting. (22.6.27.)

THE MODERN TRANSFORMATION SCENE

'Did you,' she asked me anxiously, 'see who that was who just turned that corner?'

The Modern Transformation Scene

'Blanche,' I answered with decision. 'I only saw her back, but even if I am not very intelligent I could tell that green-and-purple thing of hers with the orange squares at least a mile away, even at the dead o' night.'

'In the first place,' she said severely, 'it isn't green-and-purple at all, and they're not squares—they're the new Cubist circle pattern; and in the second place that frock you mean is one that Blanche sold three weeks ago to one of the Brown de Jones girls.'

'Oh, did she?' I said, a little surprised. 'Well then, I suppose it was one of the Brown de Jones girls.'

'But,' she pointed out, 'the Brown de Jones girls had a sale of their duds only last week. I know, because Major Wilkins was there, and I believe he bought it.'

'In that case,' I said resignedly, 'it was probably Wilkins I saw, little as I thought it at the moment; only he must have shrunk a good deal.'

'Don't be silly,' she rebuked me. 'If he bought it, it wasn't for himself; it was for Jane Wilkins, because she couldn't go, as she had to be at Lady Plantagenet's sale first, and then go on to that dear little Countess de Midas, who was letting all her glad-rags go for almost anything you liked to give her. I got the duckiest pair of toad-skin shoes you ever saw, with diamanté heels and the sweetest pearl toes. Such a pity they turned out to be both rights!'

'Oh, well,' I said, 'I suppose we must all of us, even the Countess de Midas, pay our motoring fines, but what do the poor ladies do when they have stripped themselves thus of all their raiment?'

'They buy some more,' she explained. 'That's what it's done for, and not for paying motoring fines or anything else. You see when you haven't one single thing in your whole wardrobe you haven't worn at least twice and you're positively sick to death of the very sight of the whole lot, you send out cards with "Sale of Frocks" in the bottom left-hand corner, and everyone comes. Why, you have to *fight* very often now to get into houses where you never dreamed of going before. It's ever so exciting. And after tea everyone *rushes* upstairs; only I think it's mean to sit near the drawing-room door and pretend you've had tea already, so as to be first upstairs when

The Modern Transformation Scene

the rush begins. Everything goes like—like parlourmaids and cooks.

‘Without warning?’

‘I meant, one moment there, and the next gone. And there’s no need now to be vexed because you’ve missed a frock or a hat you see someone else wearing and you realize how well it would have suited you. You just wait till she sends out cards for her sale and then you buy it. ‘Of course,’ she went on, ‘some people don’t play the game. One woman had two sales of her old things in three weeks. Not that there was anything in that exactly, only that it was rumoured that a wholesale dealer’s van had been seen at her back door the same morning, and, besides, quite a lot of the frocks were too small for her. Of course, if people had really believed it, it would have meant social extinction.’

‘Naturally,’ I said. ‘But this idea of selling off your stuff attracts me. I’ve an old pair of plus-fours myself, as well as one right-hand white kid glove and a whole drawer-ful of dress-ties that I’ve tried in vain and never again.’

‘It is a splendid idea,’ she agreed, though with woman’s usual egotism showing little interest in my own list of possible sales, ‘and it’s caught on wonderfully. Everyone is doing it. Why, you know my gold-and-apricot frock that suited me so well? I couldn’t wear it any more because people were beginning to know it again from afar, so I put it in my last sale.’

‘But,’ I protested, puzzled, ‘if people were beginning to know it from afar when you wore it, why should they want to wear it themselves? Unless, of course,’ I added thoughtfully, ‘to show how much better it suited them.’

‘An idea like that,’ she said with dignity, ‘would occur to no one but a man. Anybody not absolutely’—she sought for a gentler word and found it not—‘stupid would see at once that the *ensemble* would be perfectly new. Besides, when a thing’s *the* thing—well, there you are.’

‘And that’s very true,’ I agreed, much struck by the force and subtlety of the argument.

‘Anyhow,’ she continued, ‘it went for such a good price I was able to buy these perfectly lovely alligator shoes I’m wearing and

The Modern Transformation Scene

I'd been wanting for ages. Tom simply can't understand how I could afford them.'

'I shouldn't tell him.'

'Oh, I won't. Of course it's awkward at times. I heard of one poor boy—he's at Oxford and awfully shy.'

'Awfully *what*?' I asked.

'Shy,' she repeated; 'and he was at a dance, and he saw a girl wearing a frock he knew ever so well because it was his sister's, and her back was towards him, so he thought he would give her a surprise, and he kissed her. Well, what do you think? It turned out to be someone else's sister. She had bought the frock that very afternoon at the poor Oxford boy's sister's glad-rag sale. You can imagine how he felt.'

'I can,' I said simply.

'Such a surprise for them both.'

'Never kiss a woman to-day for the frock she wears,' I said, 'since as likely as not it will be another's to-morrow.'

'I had a dreadful experience myself,' she confessed, 'though it was all my own fault. I heard someone in Bloomsbury was having a very swell sale of all her duds, which were mostly Rue de la Paix. So I went, and the very first thing I saw in a heap of others was a lovely apricot-and-gold frock that I knew would suit me, because I remembered how well the other had. Some other horrid women were after it, but I managed to get it first; and I was excited, and then when I got it home I found it was my own old one—the very one I had sold a month before. And I had given three-and-nine more for it than I had sold it for. I was heart-broken.'

'Most unfortunate,' I said sympathetically. 'Had you paid for it?'

'Oh, at dud sales,' she explained, 'it is always cash down. You see, most of us know each other.'

'I hadn't thought of that,' I admitted.

'But anyhow,' she continued, brightening up, 'I had got my new alligator-skin shoes out of it, so I didn't do so badly after all, did I?'

'No,' I agreed, as I bade her good-bye; 'and Tom will still be puzzled to know how you could afford them. Don't tell him.'

'Oh, I won't,' she assured me.

E. R. P.

A Prisoner of Tunisia

A New York Professor says that married men are much more inventive than single men. They have to be. (20.7.27.)

A PRISONER OF TUNISIA

He was an extraordinarily handsome man, deeply bronzed, tall, vigorous, with a fine black beard and snowy teeth. Not only was he distinctly ornamental, squatting in the middle of what we call our garden, wrapped in his brown burnous, but he made himself really useful without urging, which is unheard-of for an Arab. It is true that what we really wanted him to do was to hew wood and draw water, whereas he himself interpreted his duties as those of second nursemaid. Whenever Baby appeared the prisoner followed him adoringly. Their favourite game seemed to be for the prisoner to act as a grinning target while Baby threw stones at him. This pleased them both immensely.

You must understand that the prison system of South Tunisia is peculiar to itself. As a matter of fact it's an awfully good way of getting the work done. There are always things being constructed—a new tennis-court, an *abattoir*, a drive leading up to the General's house, and, as there are never enough workmen, the military Administration has had to think out some disciplinary measure that will provide people to do the work; so, whenever no one has committed any crimes in the ordinary way, they sit down and put their heads together and arrange, for instance, that anyone leaving his dog unattached within more than ten metres of his front door will be liable to three weeks' imprisonment. They post this up outside the Bureau, and then a sergeant is sent out hastily to round-up those who haven't yet seen the notice. In this way lots of innocents are gathered into the net, and, as they have free board and lodging in prison and no more than a reasonable amount of work to do, everybody is pleased all round.

When there are more prisoners than are really wanted for the public works, which does sometimes happen when the Administration has been unusually spry, each officer is allotted one to work in

A Prisoner of Tunisia

his garden. I had become quite fond of our latest one, he was so handsome and so obliging. True, he was always washing his garments with my soap, but, as I am very keen on encouraging cleanliness in the natives, I did not feel like taking him to task about it.

I had first of all been anxious as to what was his particular crime. I couldn't believe he had stolen, quarrelled or got drunk; I felt sure, rather, that he was a victim of the Administration's wiliness. And Abdullah, the orderly, having translated the question, replied:

'He says he knows not of what he is guilty. He says he thinks it is because the Khelifa of his village has a grudge against him. He says that Khelifa said to him and two others that, if they did not give him twenty francs each, he would see that they went to prison for a month.'

'Justice,' I said to my husband when he came back, 'is simply a farce in this country. This poor wretch has actually been black-mailed. Just because he refused to give the Khelifa twenty francs he was sent to prison for a month.'

'He could not give him twenty francs,' put in Abdullah, 'because he was laying aside money to purchase a wife. And now her father has given her to another.'

'That's all nonsense,' said my husband; 'he must be in prison for something—probably for brawling.'

'I'm sure it wasn't for that,' I said indignantly; 'he has the sweetest temper imaginable.'

The next day I was told that the official reason for his being in prison was that he had acted as a receiver of stolen goods.

It may be that there is something lacking in my moral code, but I simply cannot see that that is a crime deserving heavy punishment. It may come about in such an innocent way, as it had with Mohammed, the prisoner. A man had come to him and offered him three fat sheep for fifty francs each. Very simply he had disbursed a hundred and fifty francs, taken the sheep to the market on the following day and sold them for two hundred francs each. As he himself said, how was he to know that the other mafi had stolen the sheep? Might not a man have his own reasons for selling sheep at fifty francs each? Well might the sheep have been diseased, for

A Prisoner of Tunisia

instance. This seemed to me so logical, and anyway it is only what they call 'big business' in a slightly different circle.

My sympathies strengthened towards Mohammed. He became quite one of the family. Every day he borrowed a handglass and a pair of scissors and sat trimming his beard carefully in the courtyard. He always wore a flower jauntily behind his ear. One day he retired to the orderly-room and, I believe, washed, because he reappeared looking much less deeply bronzed than before. But the fact of his imprisonment weighed on his mind, despite his seeming light-heartedness. Every day Abdullah translated his latest remarks on the subject.

'The prisoner beseeches Madame to plead with the Sidi Capitaine that justice may be done. All his family are men of great honour and never has one of them been in prison before. Besides, who will support his wife and six children—of whom the eldest is but ten—while he is in prison?'

'But I thought he was trying to save money to buy himself a wife?'

'It may be that the prisoner said that the other day,' said Abdullah dispassionately. 'Now he says otherwise. Who am I that I should know the truth?'

This somewhat shook my faith in Mohammed's integrity. And yet he was extremely sensitive on the subject of his honour. He could not bear the blot on his family scutcheon. Indeed the next day he came and prostrated himself abjectly in my husband's path and said:

'O Sidi Capitaine, thou who art as my father, whose will is law to the humblest of thy children? When will it please thee to examine the case of thy servant? Before Allah the all-seeing and all-hearing I swear that I have done no man any wrong.'

'You sold three sheep——' feebly began the Sidi Capitaine, who had rather a soft spot for the eloquent one.

'May it please the Sidi Capitaine to know that the question of the sheep was but a pretext. It was really a matter of the handmaid of Cadi——'

'You said before that it was a question of twenty francs for the Khelifa. You can tell all that to the tribunal. Anyhow, the man from

A Prisoner of Tunisia

whom the sheep were stolen in the first place has brought a plaint against you.'

'I thought they were cheap because they had diseased livers,' said Mohammed mournfully.

'Is that why you sold them to the butcher? The fact is, you're a thorough-going scoundrel,' said the Sidi Capitaine, kicking him kindly but firmly out of the way.

But the same night no fewer than eleven men who said the sheep had been stolen from them, and wished Justice to render to them the balance of four hundred and fifty francs turned up at the Bureau, most of them being well known never to have possessed anything beyond a mongrel and a couple of hens. And then I pleaded earnestly with my husband to take the matter up. It did seem cruel that Mohammed's crops should go to ruin and his father disown him, not to speak of his chances of acquiring a bride being ruined (or, alternatively, his wife being left to starve) for what seemed a muddle unsolvable by anyone.

'Mohammed was released to-day,' said my husband when he came home to lunch. I gazed at the familiar figure in the brown burnous, now tenderly watering one of our rare blades of grass.

'But he's still here.'

'Yes. The evidence was too inconclusive in the sheep-stealing case, so I worked things to get him released. Half an hour ago he came back and pleaded guilty to stealing four barrels of flour from the Cadi's storehouse—we've been looking for that particular thief for some time, and I happen to know it was a negro. Still, as Mohammed seemed very much to want to be arrested again, I arrested him. You see, his honour was successfully vindicated on the original charge, so he didn't mind at all confessing to something everybody knew he'd never done.'

I sat for a moment trying to make a little sense out of all this. Then I said sadly, 'I *did* like Mohammed—he's got such a nice character—but I must say he is rather a liar. I never shall know, for instance, whether he's saving up to buy a bride or whether he really has a wife and six children.'

A Prisoner of Tunisia

'I should think,' said my husband, 'he probably has a wife and six children. That's why he wants to enjoy the freedom of our garden.'

MADAME C.

An American advertising expert at a dinner in London used the quotation, 'There's a divinity that shapes our ends'. He had evidently been ushered by a flunkey through the revolving door at his hotel. (27.7.27.)

THE CHICKEN-POX SWEEPSTAKE

When Harberson, who's a School Pre, went under with chicken-pox soon after the beginning of last term everyone more or less hooted with delight, chicken-pox being a rather inglorious sort of thing to get and savouring strongly of one's Prep. School; and then about a fortnight later, when six others from the same House got it, it became quite the fashion, when meeting School House persons, to ask how the little invalids were getting on and whether they had a good supply of toy trains and soldiers for when they reached the convalescent stage. But most of us at Thibault's began to take a rather different view when Tibbles himself pointed out at lunch one day that it was most improbable that the thing would stop short at the School House, and after that people started shouting 'Unclean!' at the School House blokes and incensed them a good deal by telling them that they ought to be equipped with bells to give warning of their approach. Those of us who hadn't had chicken-pox in their youth were mostly pretty fed up at the idea of getting it, except one or two people like Wright and Sefton I., who pointed out that the illness was known to be nothing worth speaking of after the first day or two, whereas with luck it meant missing about three weeks' work, which would be all to the good.

It was quite soon after the first batch of School House people went under that Ashby conceived the idea of the sweepstake. Everybody cottoned to the scheme at once, as they mostly do when Ashby has any hand in things, and after a good deal of discussion

The Chicken-Pox Sweepstake

it was decided to have sixpenny tickets, the prize to go to whoever drew the first member of Thibault's to be certified with the right sort of spots. Wright and a few other plutocrats who meant to take whole batches of tickets wanted to increase the field by taking in the other Houses as well, but Ashby wouldn't allow it.

'Once you include the *hoi polloi*,' he said, 'it'll involve all sorts of inquiries to establish which house was first past the doctor and the thing'll be bound to leak out and be squashed by the powers that be.'

'Just look at what a lot of blanks there'll be,' objected Wright. 'Because anybody who has had it once is practically a non-runner.'

'There always are blanks in a sweepstake,' said Ashby. 'Besides, if you want more runners we can include Tibbles himself and Mrs. Tibbles.'

'People as aged as that aren't likely to get it,' said Wright gloomily. 'Why, even Mrs. Tibbles must be quite thirty.'

'Well, then, we'll throw in the servants,' said Ashby. 'Some of them are quite young enough to be quite fair outside chances. And what about the baby?'

'By Jove, yes, the baby!' said Wright, brightening up quite a lot.

'Do babies get it?' objected someone.

'Do they?' exclaimed Ashby. 'I should jolly well think they do! Personally I should call the baby a really hot chance.'

Well, eventually everything was agreed on and the draw took place next night in the Prep. Room. Sefton I. drew Delauny, who was generally recognized to be favourite, never having had it before and having sat in class between two School House blokes just before they went under with it. Two other people, I forget who, snaffled the second and third favourites, and after that there was nothing much of note except that Wright drew himself, and Mason III. the baby. I myself drew the Matron, about the worst ticket of the lot, as Ashby said, nobody of the genus matron ever having been known to catch anything whatsoever.

How eventually the thing leaked out and got round to Tibbles was never thoroughly established, but public opinion put the blame pretty equally on Wright and Mason III. Nobody had really thought

The Chicken-Pox Sweepstake

much of Mason III.'s chance at first, until various people remembered that they'd seen Harberson taking quite a lot of notice of the kid one afternoon on the field just before he was sent to the sanatorium. Thereafter Mason III. became optimistic beyond all reason. Sefton I. offered him four-and-sixpence for his chance, but Mason III. said he wouldn't sell the baby at any price, and after that there was no holding him at all. The silly little ass would keep on way-laying Mrs. Tibbles and asking her how the baby was, to such an extent that Mrs. Tibbles got frightfully bucked and asked him to tea, where he didn't see the baby after all, as it was being kept away from the boys for fear of infection, which rather dashed Mason III.'s hopes. However, they talked about the baby for a solid hour, and later on Mrs. Tibbles was heard to say that he was one of the most charming boys in the house, and reminded her of a Murillo, which greatly incensed Mason III., when Ashby explained it to him and showed him a picture in the library of a lot of fat little beasts assing about round a fountain.

As for Wright, who, as I said, had drawn himself, the prospect of missing three weeks' work and winning nearly two pounds ten into the bargain excited him beyond measure, so that he kept taking the most ridiculously hopeful view of anything in the nature of a spot that came out on him and consulting the Matron about it until she got quite fed up with him. Then he went further and said openly that he didn't see why he shouldn't help things along a bit. Ashby told him he was an unsporting brute, but Wright refused to admit that he was unsporting at all and said that being a runner as well as a backer he was perfectly entitled to do what he could to win. After which he started hanging about the sanatorium and once managed to sneak in without being caught. The second time, however, he was nabbed by the sanatorium Matron ragging on the floor with the patients, and got reported to Tibbles.

Wright swore blind that Tibbles got nothing out of him and nobody really believes that Wright deliberately gave the show away; but the fact remains that next day at breakfast Tibbles suddenly asked Mason III. in a pleasant sort of way what was the betting on the baby getting chicken-pox. All of us looked more or less frightful

The Chicken-Pox Sweepstake

asses, after which Tibbles said he regretted that the sweepstake, being unauthorized and contrary to public policy, must be declared null and void and the money be returned to the shareholders, minus ten per cent to go to the school Mission. This, as Tibbles himself said, provided some nice exercise in Arithmetic, but Ashby solved the problem after deducting ten per cent for the Mission by paying the rest of us fivepence-halfpenny per ticket and leaving what was over to Wright and Mason III., which quite satisfied everybody except Wright and Mason III.

Mirabile dictu, after all the trouble that had been gone to, nobody at Thibault's got chicken-pox at all, not even Wright, in spite of all his efforts, which tends to show, as Ashby said, that even a chicken-pox germ must have some self-respect.

I. A.

The Sunday Press is always out for novelty. One paper is to publish the life-story of a man who has never committed a murder or even been in prison. (10.8.27.)

THE TRIALS OF TOPSY

HYMEN

Trix, dear, I've just been through the most *agonizing* of all human proceedings, an English wedding, my dear I shall *simply never* give my girlish heart away because rather than cause a whole day's *suffering* for five hundred wedding-guests well really I'd sooner remain the *world's virgin* for life, darling. Well it was poor Ann Atbury that made the trouble and my dear if people *must* be married why must they be married in the *bowels* of the country on a hot day, a complete *slug* of a train and two *Satanical* changes you know my dear all that climbing over bridges for Platform Four and the carriage full of *farmers' wives* and baskets of eggs and everything degrading, well, when we got to Stoke-under-the-Wallop or something I was simply *withered* with stuffiness and as for *hilarity*, not

The Trials of Topsy

that hilarity would have been the right *note* from what I make out, my dear we were twenty minutes too early and I *hovered* about the graveyard with Aunt Elizabeth feeling *too* funereal and *mothy* for anything, and presently the *whole* County crawled into the graveyard all draped in black and their faces like Sheffield on a wet Sunday morning, my dear they *couldn't* have worn more black if they'd come to see Ann Atbury cremated or electrocuted or turned into a *nun*, it wasn't only the men, they're a one-frock sex anyway poor dears, but you *would* think that two hundred County beauties could have bought a *dahlia* between them or clubbed together and got something bacchanal in pale grey, but my dear you *never* saw such *masses* of jet, and really my dear the *one* spot of brightness was a darling old Colonel with a lavender waistcoat and a sweet-pea buttonhole, and really *no one* would have said that we'd all come there to celebrate the gladdest moment in two people's lives and well-born I may be but I do think top hats in the country look a bit too *feudal* and morbid don't you.

Mr. Haddock said, my dear *of course* Mr. Haddock was *foully* dressed because he said *all* his wedding garments had been corrupted by moth and he had on his *only* suit as usual, but to show good will he wore a butterfly-collar and the *most* ridiculous bow tie, my dear, and he kept his overcoat on so as to make people think he was wearing a *tail coat underneath*, but of course the whole show was given away by his *hat*, my dear the most *amorphous, jelliest, dismallest* blanc-mange you ever saw! Well, he said that all this gloom was because of this putrefying law about not getting married after three o'clock, because as he said well half-past two in the afternoon is Life's Barrenest Moment, and how can you expect a Britisher to be merry *immediately* after lunch especially if he hasn't had any, as most of us hadn't because of the *tuberculous* train service, and I said Well isn't it something to do with religion or something and he said No it's *merely* because of the Nonconformists because they used to have to have *registrars* when the Nonconformists were married because from what I can make out the Nonconformists had to be treated like so many *wild beasts*, and then a man brought in a Bill, and the Home Secretary and everything, and something

The Trials of Topsy

about clandestine marriages, well, I didn't understand a word of it but from what Mr. Haddock said there's no more religion in it than there is in *lighting-up time*, and the Jews can be married at *midnight* if they like and I do think that what's good enough for the Jews ought to be good enough for a Christian girl in this country, don't you darling.

Well there it is, we went into the church, and what I thought was so perfectly *fallacious* in spite of all the black beads and satin and general dinginess simply *none* of the County registered religion, but they all *chatted* and giggled and *peered*, my dear too secular, like a Flower Show or something, well I wouldn't object to a bit of a religious kick in the service provided there was some sort of *worldly hilarity* at the reception, but my dear it was just the other way, the *moment* we gathered in Ann Atbury's mother's mouldy marquee (and I do think a marquee is man's *mouldiest* creation don't you) well a complete *blight* enwrapped the wedding guests and we all stood on *one leg* and did our best to look County and we all said *didn't* the bride look sweetly pretty though *I* thought she looked like the *Queen of the Fairies* at the Surbiton pantomime, and while Mr. Haddock was being matey with the bride no less than *five* of *Nature's* heavyweights *loaded* me with cucumber sandwiches which *always* give me a bad night and my dear I do think champagne is life's *dreariest* liquid at half-past three in the afternoon don't you, and as for *wedding* champagne where *do* they find it?

Well at last Mr. Haddock came back thank heaven and rather than look at the guests any more we went and looked at the presents, my dear the *fish-knives*, there can't be so much fish in all the world, and fourteen photos of Tallulah Bankhead, well, Mr. Haddock said wasn't it time I was getting married and he knew a nice man he'd like to meet me, and I said *how* celestial but I'm feeling like *Nature's* spinster thank you, and I can get all the fish-knives I want without putting your friends to the trouble of marrying me, well he annoyed me when he talked like that, and my dear I was so *tired* I was ready to *yelp* like a pedigree dog, and my dear you know how I *venerate* Ann Atbury, and her young man's *perfectly* congenial but *all* I wanted was for the bride and bridegroom to *leave the premises*,

The Trials of Topsy

which *shows* there must be something *radically wrong* with *weddings* doesn't it?

Well after about two days they did go, well it seemed like that, and there was all that *plebeian* revelry with *rice* and confetti and old *boots* and everything, my dear *nobody* adores clean fun more than I do but I do think when a girl's best friends are seeing her off into the New Life which stretches before her and everything they *might* think of something more *affectionate* to do than throw *cereals* down a girl's *back*, don't you, but there it is, that's *weddings* and I suppose it's a kind of unconscious *revenge* for all the *sufferings* of the wedding guests, well there we were, you see, *suspended* in mid air, so to speak, at Stoke-under-the-Wallop at half-past five in the afternoon, and all the girls half dead with ices and standing on one leg and all the men half alive with champagne and no train till 7.15 and two *Satanical* changes at that, my dear too *pulverizing*.

Well you know that *morbid* post-wedding sensation, when everybody thinks they must do *something* and nobody wants to do *anything* but get to bed or a lunatic asylum, so about sixteen of us went with the best man to Reggie's and worked like *slaves* to be gay, my dear too ghastly, everybody tried to be *funny* and nearly everybody was simply septic, and we all talked at once and the waiters merely *ignored* the whole party, my dear I was famished, and Mr. Haddock went on and on about the Marriage Act of eighteen-something and how all this *misery* was simply because you have to be married at the *idiot* hour of half-past two instead of reasonably in the evening, and really I do think there must be something in it and if only there was a *soul* in Parliament with the *guts* of a goldfish they might perhaps do something about it, but there isn't, so no more now, your devastated Topsy.

A. P. H.

All we seem to need now in this correspondence on stag-hunting is a letter from a stag saying how much he enjoys it. (7.9.27.)

In Praise of the Tote

IN PRAISE OF THE TOTE

(Among the merits of the *pari mutuel* system the following should be particularly noted: (1) If you win you are not taking the money of a working bookmaker but that of your fellow profligates; (2) The Tote can't run away. To those who complain that the book-makers' occupation will be gone the answer is that the services of some of them will still be required, and that the rest, by operating on the totalisator, should still be able to get a living out of a less-instructed public.)

*Times have been when I, a heavy winner,
Underwent remorse and said,
'Will my bookie go without his dinner?'
And my tender heart has bled
As I seemed to hear his little children crying out for bread.*

*When I felt my trouser pockets bulging
I would ask, with eyes grown dim,
'Am I really right to be indulging
In cruel joy and grim?
What is fun for me (so thoughtless) may amount to death for him.'*

*But a Thing that has no human feeling,
Wears no private tum or throat,
Stirs no thought of hungry infants squealing
When it drops a ten-pound note—
That is different, that is why I have a leaning towards the Tote.*

*If you say that still the spoil I scoop'll
Come from someone, I agree;
But I shouldn't nurse the faintest scruple,
I should have my conscience free,
If I merely drew the surplus increment of mugs like me.*

*As for bookies who in loud palaver
Curse a cold machine that shunts*

In Praise of the Tote

*Honest people from their trade in favour
Of these new exotic stunts.
Let them take the higher status of an amateur that punts.*

*If they claim to have, by use and cunning,
Better eyes than ours to tell
What's the chance of any horse that's running,
They should still do pretty well
Out of us, the childlike public, with a pari mutuel.*

*Lastly, I prefer (a natural penchant)
Betting-mediums that stay
Where I left 'em, as they do at Longchamps,
Which is why I long and pray
For a Tote that's fixed in situ far too tight to get away.*

O. S.

THE INCIDENT OF THE EX-PRESIDENT

Now and then, impelled by a lurking desire for adventure, perhaps, or by a craving for the bizarre, I like to dine at one or another of those little foreign restaurants that are to be found in unpretentious side-streets in the neighbourhood of Soho. It amuses me to watch the people there, to wonder which of them are artists and which, possibly, criminals of the demi-monde; and anyway it breaks the monotony of the club. One may observe a greater diversity of type.

It was in one of these little establishments, the *Café des Assassins*, that I first encountered the bearded stranger. He occupied the table next to mine, a veritable colossus of a man with dark piercing eyes, a great aquiline nose and the most imposing black beard I have ever seen. Long and thick and curling slightly outwards at its extremity it completely hid his waistcoat from view. He sat eating spinach with an air of conscious dignity and power.

I regarded him out of the corner of my eye and wondered who and what he might be. An exiled President of a South American Republic, I thought, or a Russian Grand Duke of the old *régime*, or

The Incident of the Ex-President

a Balkan notability travelling *incognito* on some secret and possibly hazardous mission. Who could say? Clearly he was no ordinary man.

Then, as I watched him, a surprising thing happened. Without warning, an expression of diabolical fury convulsed his features. Dealing the table a smashing blow with his tremendous fist he mounted to his feet; upsetting his chair behind him with an alarming clatter.

'*Caramba!*' he roared in a voice of thunder. 'Ten thousand furies! Waiter! Waiter!!'

Women screamed and clung to their companions. Waiters dropped their dishes and rushed forward with frightened cries.

'Look,' he shouted, seizing the foremost in a grasp of iron, 'see, *regardez*, son of a dog!' In his right hand he held aloft his fork, on the prongs of which was impaled the corpse of a large beetle.

For a long time he declined to be appeased. The proprietor, wringing his hands, and apologizing in all the languages of the Mediterranean seaboard, besought his forgiveness. It was a catastrophe the most terrible, he wept; his *chef de cuisine* should be dismissed instantly; the honour of his establishment, of his country, of Mussolini, demanded it. The offending dish was spirited away; the menu and the wine list pressed upon the outraged client. Let Monsieur order what he desired, he, the proprietor, would serve him with his own hands. Ah, but Monsieur would pardon him; Monsieur was gentle and magnanimous and would permit him to make amends for this misfortune so deplorable.

Monsieur allowed himself to be coaxed back to his seat. He had, it appeared, destroyed men for insults less insufferable. Glaring round he caught my eye. Even yet, he declared, he might be moved to some swift and terrible act. Let him see the menu; and the wine list. He would, while guaranteeing nothing, endeavour to restrain his natural and altogether commendable impulse to shed blood.

I left him settling down to a lavish meal, attended assiduously by the proprietor, with waiters darting about in the background like nervous swallows. He was still muttering unintelligible imprecations into his great beard.

The Incident of the Ex-President

And there one would have expected the incident to end, but chance had it otherwise.

One evening, several months afterwards, I happened to drop into *La Maison des Chiens Bleus*. The tables were crowded, but I immediately perceived at the farther end of the room the gigantic stature and arresting beard of the man I now felt assured was an ex-President of some turbulent but picturesque Latin-American state. All this while doubtless he was plotting and scheming and waiting for the hour to strike. Woe to his adversaries, I thought, when at last he had them in his power.

And then the most impossible thing in the world occurred before my eyes. A resounding crash echoed through the room and I saw the vast figure of the exiled patriot once more rising to his feet.

'Perdition and devils!' his mighty voice bellowed, '*per Bacco!* Waiter! Waiter! Presto! Death of a pig!'

High above his massive leonine head he held his fork, on which, even at that distance, I easily perceived the shape of a large beetle.

Not without interest I watched the details of the scene in the *Café des Assassins* faithfully re-enacted.

I tarried over my bottle of wine until at length the bearded giant rose to depart. With superb dignity, looking neither to right nor left, he strode past the tables, but, as he passed my corner, I leaned across and touched his arm. He turned with a glance of cold hauteur.

'Pardon me, Sir,' I whispered, 'but as a humble though earnest entomologist I should be extremely grateful if you would tell me where you are so fortunate as to be able to secure such uncommonly well-proportioned and serviceable specimens of *Blatta orientalis*, the common or domestic cockroach.'

His impulsive movement of anger ceased as a gleam of recognition dawned in his eye.

'Ah, Signor,' he murmured, 'adversity teaches strange expedients to us poor gentlemen whose cultured tastes so far outrun our slender patrimony. Since necessity compels one to lodge in disagreeable basements it were flouting providence not to take advantage of the opportunities one finds so profusely to hand. *Addio*, Signor, or,

The Incident of the Ex-President

since you would seem to frequent these simple haunts of the aristocratic poor, let me say *A rivederci*. Perhaps when next we meet you will do me the honour of dining with me. My resources in *one* direction at least are inexhaustible.'

And with a grave inclination of his splendid beard he passed to the door.

C. L. M. B.

'A Girl of To-day' writing in a morning paper wishes she was fifty. Lots of girls of to-day are. (16.11.27.)

THE PUNTER'S SOLACE

(A racing writer suggests that a horse's refusal to do his best in a race may be a sign of superior intelligence.)

*Full often I've railed upon Sonnie,
Accounting his conduct a sin
When he carried my trifle of money,
Nor made any effort to win;
He gave me good reason for sighing,
Since cash isn't easily got,
And I found his performances trying,
Although he was not.*

*By my favourite prophet directed,
As soon as the season began
I made him my 'special selected'
To follow whenever he ran;
But vainly I've urged him to gee-up
When bearing my dollar (or crown);
No matter what jockey might be up
I always went down.*

The Punter's Solace

*Such railing is silenced for ever.
My murmurings cease now I find
That, maybe, his feeble endeavour
Proclaims a superior mind;
When rivals so oft in the past set
A pace he refused to maintain,
This showed his contempt for the fast set
Which hasn't much brain.*

*No longer my tongue shall attack him,
My lips shall be decently dumb,
The while I continue to back him,
Convinced an occasion will come
When, wearied of filling the worst place,
He'll demonstrate clearly instead
That his brain is entitled to first place
And win by a head.*

T. H.

It is said that authors like reading novels. We understand that recently Mr. Edgar Wallace read a book with great enjoyment and then noticed that it was an early volume from the pen of Mr. Edgar Wallace. (11.1.28.)

BRAINS AND THE GOLFER

I have always contended that brains are the bane of the golfer. Brains connote imagination, and imagination is a far, far greater curse than a right shoulder that ducks, a head that moves, an elbow that sticks out, a body that sways, a hip that doesn't turn, a left arm that bends in the middle. For imagination is the root cause of all and sundry of these afflictions.

The perfect golfer (there isn't any) would be one whose mind was a permanent blank throughout the swing. He would plant his

Brains and the Golfer

feet at a comfortable distance from the ball, take one glance at the direction in which he was aiming, and, his mind thrust wholly out of the business, he would just swing like a gate. There are no brains or imagination in a gate; a gate that has once learnt to swing swings always in the same faultless fashion. There is nothing to check it in the middle of its back-swing and make it wonder whether it is taking itself away far enough outwards, or slowly enough, or close enough to the ground, or far enough away from the ground; there is no chance that when it reaches the end of its back-swing it will wonder whether it has got into the right position for the forward swing; no danger that it will begin the forward swing hurriedly and in a panic, or hesitate for a second too long, so that it loses its balance; no possibility that just prior to the moment of impact with its latch it should be filled with apprehension lest it take a great chunk out of the ground or miss the latch altogether by hitting the air above it. None of these things happen in the swing of a gate. Because the gate has no brains or imagination.

I have mentioned this theory of mine to golfers of all types and handicaps, but never have I found one to agree with me. The very good golfers reject it, I suppose, on the ground that it is a personal insult; the very bad golfers—men like managing directors of banks and insurance companies, editors, K.C.s and the like—no doubt reject the theory because it would preclude them once and for all from attaining what has by now become their one ambition in life.

My theory, however, remains incontrovertible.

I have a friend called Brown. Brown is not a remarkably clever man, but he has an average amount of brains and imagination. His golf is not distinguished, but he is undoubtedly a better golfer than I am. I have often propounded this theory of mine to Brown, and it has always annoyed him tremendously. He calls it 'the comfortable cloak of a rabbit'. It is therefore with the utmost satisfaction that I quote an extract from a letter which I received from Brown the other day, posted from somewhere in Italy, where he was practising for a local championship:

'I have just come across the most wonderful stunt for golf. A man out here has suggested it to me, and it works wonders. It

Brains and the Golfer

sounds silly at first, but you just try it. This is it: Whenever you are playing a shot—and this is the beauty of it, it doesn't matter what shot it is, from a full drive to a short pitch—you pretend that you are being watched *by your best girl*. No, don't laugh; it is marvellous. It has the effect of steadying you down completely, making you swing gracefully and smoothly, and giving you the most perfect follow-through. Instead of pressing on your drive to get the extra thirty yards, or digging at your iron shots to make sure they go up in the air, you just stand up comfortably and confidently and make a perfectly good shot. You *can't* go wrong. It's mental, you know. It takes your mind off the difficulties—gives you a kind of pride, a feeling of superiority, or whatever it is. But you try it and let me know.'

Well, if that's not an admission of my theory, what is? What else is this but a trick for the bamboozling of the brain, the stifling of an overwrought imagination? And as such may it not be as good as Brown paints it? Is it not just such a trick as this that we golfers are in need of, in place of those worn-out maxims about our arms and legs and ankles and wrists and feet and fingers and shoulders and thighs? May this not be so?

The fact that Brown's scheme failed with me must not be taken as a criterion. It was due simply to the fact that I couldn't think who was my best girl. On the first tee I began dutifully and naturally with my wife. As I addressed my ball I thought of my wife. I pictured her standing there watching me swing. I shifted uneasily realizing that she had spotted that my stance was all cramped up. I straightened up and brought my feet closer together. At the beginning of my back-swing I was careful to turn the left hip slightly in advance of any other part of my anatomy, realizing that my wife was on the look-out for this. Half-way through the back-swing I halted, realizing that my left elbow was sticking out and obstructing my view of the ball; at the top of my swing I was conscious that everything had gone awry and that there was no hope unless I began the whole thing all over again. But it was too late. There were several couples on the tee waiting to drive off, and the shot had to be completed. In a flash I determined to forget my

Brains and the Golfer

wife, and, concentrating on a straight right leg, a stiff left arm, a rigid head, a pivot from the hips, I crashed down on the ball, snicking it into the rough about eight yards from the tee. It was evident that my wife was not my best girl for the purpose of Brown's scheme. Never again would I use her so.

It was not until the third hole that I was able to think of another best girl. This was Joan. Joan is my wife's young sister—a pretty girl, a beautiful dancer and banjulele-player, but no golfer. Joan seemed all right. But, alas! Joan giggled on the stroke and ruined the shot completely.

I tried Phyllis at the next hole—a short hole, calling for a neat little pitch-mashie shot. Phyllis is even prettier than Joan. I met her at a dance the other day, and—well, Phyllis did not act. I think my wife was watching again or something. Anyhow, I hurried the shot most horribly, looked up and socketed my ball into the stinging nettles on the right.

I will not take you through the whole of this unhappy round and the list of girls whom I called upon to act as best girls to me. One and all they failed me miserably.

But as I say this does not necessarily condemn the scheme. On the contrary, I think it is well worth a trial; after all what tip isn't worth trying if you suffer from brains at golf?

L. B. G.

An actress says that her wedding will be a very quiet one. We anticipate that the ceremony will take place in a blaze of secrecy. (1.2.28.)

THE PLAY-REPAIRERS

The establishment of the proposed West End Play-Repairers Company, employing highly competent critics and dramatic experts, will be welcomed by playwrights all over the country, for thus they will be enabled, before production, to have their plays put into shape by fully qualified men at a moderate charge, varying with the

The Play-Repairers

amount of correction and revision necessary. Few will deny that this arrangement will be greatly superior to the present one, whereby professional criticism—free though it is to the dramatist—only appears after the fateful first night of production.

So expert is the personnel of the Company likely to be that the chances of the failure of a play that has passed through its hands will be exceedingly remote, and the resultant popularity of the scheme will make the unsuccessful first night an extremely rare occurrence. Indeed one can look forward to the day when our leading Insurance Companies will undertake to insure for an extremely moderate premium any play that has passed through this preliminary process of preparation.

It only remains to say that the promoter of the Company is, as might be expected, an enterprising man of business, and the Company will be run on strictly business lines. The manner in which the Company will set about its work is fully illustrated by the correspondence that appears below.

*Letter from the West End Play-Repairers Company Ltd., to
Arthur Applehead, Playwright.*

Dear Sir,—We have pleasure in enclosing herewith an estimate in connection with the necessary repairs to your Three-Act Play, *Fool's Mate*, and we await the favour of your instructions to put them in hand.

If upon closer inspection further faults should become evident a supplementary estimate will be forwarded immediately, and we trust this will be in order.

Assuring you of our best attention at all times,

Yours faithfully, The W.E.P.R. Co., Ltd.

ESTIMATE

	£	s.	d.
(1) To completely dismantling Act I, thoroughly overhauling, putting same in good order and reassembling ..	2	15	0
(2) To repairing three split infinitives <i>W</i> 9d. ..	0	2	3
(3) To inspecting all entrances and exits, re-timing where necessary	0	15	0
(4) To removing two protagonists, supplying and fitting substitutes <i>W</i> £1 1s. 0d.	2	2	0

The Play-Repairers

(5)	To supplying and fitting eight Laugh Lines, fully guaranteed, <i>W</i> 6s. 8d.	£	s.	d.
(6)	To checking over all love passages, making the necessary adjustments	2	13	4
(7)	To adjusting stage directions and rearranging furniture, including introduction of one grand piano	1	17	6
(8)	To removing all bad language, slang expressions, etc., and substituting stronger and more up-to-date, do. do.	1	9	6
		1	11	6

TOTAL	13	6	1
-------	----	---	---

L. G. L.

It has been ruled in the Courts that beer is not a medicine. And very often it isn't even beer. (22.2.28.)

A meteorological expert thinks the seasons will soon be completely altered. Last year was a good start with its Winter, Winter, Autumn and Winter. (21.3.28.)

NOTHING IN THE SLOT

The sea-front had an out-of-season aspect; but then it was the end of January, the most out of season of all the out-of-seasons. An elderly seafaring man was making lobster-pots of withies on the lee side of a boat, and in the roadway opposite the landward end of the pier two men had made a hole. I stood for a moment looking down upon them. But the one with the brown waistcoat had an unresponsive eye, and I feared to risk a pleantry. I passed instead on to the pier—without paying, for there was no one to pay.

Under a shelter half-way along the pier I came upon a little nest of penny-in-the-slot machines. Involuntarily my hand went to my pocket—it shows how bored I was. And as it did so I was startled by a little man who rose from a secluded seat and hurried towards me, his hand uplifted.

Nothing in the Slot

'Don't do it, Sir,' he said in a wheezy voice.

I stared at him. He had on the back of his head a bowler hat of about his own age, but some three sizes too large for him; and he wore two seedy overcoats, the outer one so evidently smaller than the inner one that I longed to suggest that he should try reversing them.

'Don't you do it, Sir,' he said again.

'Don't do what?'

'Don't go wasting your pennies. Them machines is mostly out of order; and even if they weren't. . . . 'Ere, if you want to put a penny in, you give it to me.'

He held out his hand with so imperious a gesture that, before I knew what I was doing, I had placed a penny in it.

'Which one do you want?' he asked. He spoke in the firm patient voice that one uses to an unreasonable child. I don't know why I didn't resent it. I pointed instead to the football-match.

'That takes tuppence,' he said; 'one for you and one for me.'

He held out his hand once more. This was too much; I couldn't allow him to think me such a mug as that. Yet to refuse meant an end to the adventure. I have said that I was bored, and I didn't want the adventure to end. His assurance was so admirable; here, I felt, was a born financier. I handed him another penny.

'Now, if this machine was working, we should put the two pennies in and up'd come the ball. Then you'd press that lever and I'd press this lever to make the figures kick; and the one as kicked the first goal would get 'is money back. But I dessay it isn't working, and if we was to put our pennies in'—'our' pennies was good—we should lose them. So I'll just tell you about it.' With this he dropped the pennies quietly into his trouser pocket.

'We'll imagine,' he went on, warming to his work, 'that the ball's come up. The yellow-and-black jerseys is yours; the red-and-blue jerseys is mine. Now you presses and yours kicks; now I presses and mine kicks. Now the ball's your end. Now the ball's my end.' He was becoming quite excited. 'Now it's back your end again. Ah'—he turned to me, real regret sounding in his voice—'you pressed too soon then. Your man kicked backwards. Blowed if you

Nothing in the Slot

ain't kicked it into your own goal. So I gets my money back.' Solemnly he produced one of the pennies from his pocket, placed it in the tray on to which the machine should have ejected the winner's penny and picked it up again. 'Never mind; better luck next time,' he said consolingly, and before I could remonstrate he hurried me on to the 'Fire' machine.

'You'll like this one,' he said; 'it's great—when it's working.' He held his hand out without looking at me. I placed a penny in it.

'You puts the penny in. A bell rings, and that door there opens. See?'

I saw nothing but that the penny had joined the other two in his pocket. But he went on joyously.

'Out comes the fire-engine, or should do. Three men on it, there are, in 'elmets. Now, see that fire-escape? A fireman comes up it, and as 'e does so a red light lights up in the winder. Up the ladder 'e goes, and then down 'e comes again with the baby in 'is arms. Then the engine goes in, the door shuts and you 'ear the penny drop down inside the machine. There's no money back this time,' he added as an afterthought.

'So I guessed,' I murmured.

'But this is *the* one,' he cried, taking me by the arm and hurrying me up the pier to the far end of the shelter. This really is *the* one for you.'

Confronted with the one for me I felt a slight shock, not only at its subject but at its alleged connection with myself. Above the machine was the legend, 'The English Execution. Last Rights,' and the glass case containing a model of a repulsive building with two policemen on the balcony.

'Realistic execution, Sir; thrillin' spectacle. Penny, please.'

'I've no more pennies,' I said.

'I can give you change,' he cried. 'You've got a shilling!' He produced a handful of pennies as by magic and, reduced to impotence by this time, I gave up my shilling and had eleven pennies from him in return.

'When this machine is working'—he was speaking now in a sepulchral voice—'the lower door opens slowly. Prisoner's there

Nothing in the Slot

with a rope round 'is neck, and the chapling waving 'is arms like this. Ex'orting him,' he added a little vaguely. 'Then'—his voice dropped almost to a whisper—the trap-door opens and the prisoner drops down. Realistic.' He shook his head. 'Best thing they've got.'

We stood there solemnly together. Almost I took off my hat. Then, though I did not at all wish actually to see the realistic and thrilling scene, I could not resist saying, 'Is it certain that the machine really is out of order, do you think? As it's so very good you might just try putting the penny in.'

He turned to me and regarded me for a moment with a look suggesting sorrow rather than anger, then, tapping me on the chest with a grubby finger, he thus admonished me:

'Now don't you go throwing your money away,' he said. 'It *may* be working; but, on the other hand, it may not. And you can't tell, not till it's too late. You be content with what you've got. See? Just a few pennies for a bit of amusement, that's all right; but if you go too far it becomes gambling. You take a warning. There's many a man——'

All at once he stopped. Something behind me appeared to have caught his eye. I looked round and saw in the distance, coming along the parade, an official-looking person in a peaked cap. Turning again I found to my surprise that my friend was already ten yards on his way towards the mainland.

'You take a warning. So long,' he called over his shoulder, moving away with ever-increasing velocity.

I would have wished him godspeed and good hunting, for I was beginning to have a real affection for him; but he was not within earshot.

I shook my head over one more ship that had passed in the night, and went sorrowfully to lean over the pier rails and contemplate the nut-brown ocean. Then an idea came to me. I returned to the automatic machines, and as a test case tried two pennies in the 'Football' Machine. It was working perfectly. Likewise the 'Fire' scene; and, though I could not bring myself to try it, I have no doubt the 'Execution' was also.

Nothing in the Slot

Somehow I admired my friend in the old bowler and the two great-coats more than ever.

A. W. B.

'AS YOU (APPARENTLY) LIKE IT'

(Being some items of News Worth Knowing, with acknowledgment to our contemporaries.)

MAN SWALLOWS MACKINTOSH

Amazing Episode At Oxford Circus

Considerable interest was aroused at one o'clock to-day, by the sight of a man standing at the corner of Oxford Circus who suddenly swallowed his mackintosh.

The consumer was a middle-aged man with blue eyes and a small well-cropped moustache. When questioned by the policeman on point-duty the man stated that his name was Jones, that he was married and had a family of three daughters. He gave no reason for swallowing his mackintosh, but it seems probable that he acted under an uncontrollable impulse.

MOTHER-HATRED

Professor Urge, the well-known psycho-analyst, told our correspondent this afternoon that actions of this kind are sometimes due to the unconscious recollection of some religious excitement in early childhood, but more usually to the suppression of a man's natural loathing of his mother.

'The presence of a mackintosh in the alimentary tract,' states a medical practitioner, 'sets up an irregular condition, but not necessarily a fatal one. Cases of mackintosh-craving have been rare in the British Isles in recent years.'

PRETTY GIRLS' ORDEAL

Chased by Giant Shrimp

Mystery Rescuer

The beautiful twin sisters, Margaret and Jeanne Swallow (aged

'As You (Apparently) Like It'

17), writes a correspondent, underwent a harassing experience yesterday afternoon when walking along the shore at Brighton. They had been chatting together peacefully for some time when suddenly they became aware that they were being followed by an uncanny and hideous-looking monster, which subsequently proved to be a giant shrimp.

CHIVALRY OF BELIEVED ARISTOCRAT

'When we began to run,' Jeanne told our correspondent, 'the monster doubled its pace and almost made up on us. Had it not been for the courage and presence of mind of a passer-by, who headed off the beast and drove it into the sea, neither of us would have survived to tell the tale.'

Although the rescuer remains anonymous, it is believed in some quarters that he is a scion of the Nobility, and that he has confidentially revealed his identity to Jeanne.

WOMEN ABOLISHED IN SANFIASCO

Dungeon for Dictator's Wife

New Male State

From Our Special Correspondent

Women are the latest victims of the iron hand whose influence has been so strongly felt recently in the Republic of Sanfiasco.

A decree, issued yesterday by General Calluz, enjoins the immediate abolition of all women and girls over the age of fifteen.

BOTTLE-NECKED DUNGEON

The General, who announces that he is determined to crush all opposition, has already given orders for his wife to be immured in a deep bottle-necked dungeon, which has been specially prepared for the purpose by German engineers.

'PREPARED TO ABOLISH EVERYTHING'

'The new Pan-Male Republic, which has become necessary owing to the ultra-emancipation of women,' states General Calluz in a special message to our readers, 'will remain friendly to Great

‘As You (Apparently) Like It’

Britain; but it is a mistake to suppose that the general policy of abolition can be relaxed at present. There is nothing which, if the welfare of Sanfascismo demands it, I am not prepared to abolish. I shall visit your beautiful city as soon as I have crushed all opposition.’

CHILD SWIMMING-PRODIGY TO ATTEMPT ATLANTIC

Webbed Feet That Will Help

Mother Confident

Bridget McGillicuddy, the swimming child-prodigy (aged nine), is to attempt to swim the Atlantic from Balswillie, on the West Coast of Ireland. If successful, this will be the first Trans-Atlantic swim from East to West.

She will be accompanied by a London Rowing Club eight on the journey, and fed from time to time on raw eggs and marmalade, with occasional sips of whey.

CLOSE TO GULF STREAM

In an interview with our Correspondent, Bridget replied to questions as follows :

‘I don’t expect to feel tired at all. Swimming in the sea is so much less tiring than in fresh water, and most of my practice has been done in the fresh-water baths at Hammersmith. I shall keep close to the Gulf Stream so as not to suffer from cold. I have webbed feet, which should make my task easier.’

MOTHER’S CONFIDENCE

Mrs. McGillicuddy, the little girl’s mother, told our Correspondent that she is confident that the child will succeed. ‘We are a very determined family,’ she added with a smile.

R. J. Y.

According to a woman writer, it is not always the good-looking girl who makes the best wife. In these days beauty is so often only knee deep. (11.4.28.)

Song of the Cat-Burglar's Daughter
SONG OF THE CAT-BURGLAR'S
DAUGHTER

*Father's an anxiety
All the time he's 'out',
Putting filial piety
Wholly to the rout;
Only bent on winning
Perilous repute
By his skill in shinning
Up a pipe for loot.*

*O joyful Joynson, admirable Jix,
Father isn't strong enough to lay or carry bricks;
Father's not the sort of man to occupy a pew—
Please send Father to the Zoo.*

*Some are born to trouble,
And I may remark
All his joints are double,
All his ways are dark;
Though he's slim and fragile
He's an acrobat,
And as cute and agile
As a super-cat.*

*O jolly Joynson, philanthropic Jix,
Rescue me and Mother and the little chicks;
Entertain the public—Chalmers Mitchell too—
Please send Father to the Zoo.*

*On the merry Mappin
Terraces he'd play
With the lords of rapine
And the beasts of prey,
Cautiously retreating*

Song of the Cat-Burglar's Daughter

*From the lion's rage
To the central-heating
Of the monkeys' cage.*

*O genial Joynson, generous-minded Jix,
Father is a funny man full of monkey tricks;
We can spare him gladly for a year or two;
Please send Father to the Zoo.*

*Ev'ry Sunday Mother,
With the little 'uns,
Bert and 'Erb his brother,
And a bag of buns
(For Dad's really rather
Fond of buns) would roll
Round to look at Father
Climbing up the pole.*

*O joyous Joynson, estimable Jix,
Help a harassed family in this painful fix!
Father's coming out next week, so we look to you;
Please send Father to the Zoo.*

C. L. G.

Now that Commander Daniel has joined the staff of the *Daily Mail* it is rumoured that the *Daily Express* is going to offer Admiral Collard a post as musical critic. (2.5.28.)

LORD CHARIOT'S GAFFE

'Toto is a broken woman,' remarked Nitocris Jones; 'she's brooding. I've just been sitting with her. By the way, have you a death sentence? She smoked all mine.'

Lord Chariot's Gaffe

'Then,' I said, offering my cigarettes and a match; 'there is still something left of the Toto we all love.'

'You knew (puff), thanks (puff), she gave up good works, didn't you?' said Nitocris.

'Yes, but why?'

'She found herself getting so frightfully matey with the ignorant poor that it was all she could do not to be rude to her committee. Then of course she went all Chelsea. There was nothing else for her to do, was there?'

'Get married,' I suggested.

'Bless you, darling,' said Nitocris, 'the man she feels she wants isn't *nearly* divorced yet. Well, to plod on, she got in with Désirée Mondschein's gang—Hereward Gobbins, the one-jade-vase-against-a-passionate-black-wall young man, and Lady Wangle——'

'Who *is* Lady Wangle?'

'Darling, no one knows. And the late Sir Silvester was a bit of a dark knight too. But there she is—1919 Honours List, oodles of money, as kind as treacle and *rather naughty*.'

'I know,' I said, 'I know.'

'Then there's Penelope Chevronny, the good old family gone bravely to seed, my dear; and little Percy Stedje, he talks about Bund Street, and the bold bad Bart, and——'

'And now there's Toto le Mousine.'

'Was, my lamb,' said Nitocris.

'Do you mean she's stopped being Chelsea already?'

'She's left that gang, anyhow—since last night. I'll tell you all about it.'

I produced another cigarette and another match.

'Well (puff), thanks (puff), last night Désirée Mondschein and Lady Wangle gave a joint bottle-and-pyjama party in Désirée's studio—you know, everyone brings a bottle of something, wears pyjamas, looks resigned and talks about urges. And no one started the evening more resigned than Toto. In fact, she told me she felt a hundred per cent Bohemian.'

'But last night Lord Chariot,' Nitocris went on impressively, 'was dining at his club with a friend who had saved his life in the Crimea

Lord Chariot's Gaffe

or something of the sort, and it appears from his subsequent excuses to Toto that the friend said to him with the third brandy, "Chariot, what's happened to your seven girls?"

"They're married," said Lord Chariot. "No, begad, they're not. There's Toto." And he rang up Chariot House and asked was Miss Thomasina in.

"Well, the housekeeper, who, as you know, has mothered Toto for years, piped up in rather a distressed fashion from the other end, and said that Miss Thomasina had left the house wearing a fur coat and pyjamas, and with a bottle of whisky under her arm, about half-past nine. And she supplied Désirée's address from the invitation card that she had found on Toto's table.

"So Lord Chariot came back with all this to his friend, and the friend said, "From what I hear, if your daughter can be seen in a particular place nowadays, *you* can. Let's go and see what this affair is like. You can say you've come to fetch her."

"I understand we must take bottles."

"By all means," said the friend. So they each pocketed a bottle of beer.

"Well, they arrived, and Lord Chariot said to Percy Stedge, who had drifted down in mauve pyjamas to open the door, "Good evening. I'm Miss le Mousine's father. I've come to take her home when she's ready. I hope you don't mind?"

"Oh, no," said Percy; "how precious! I say, do come on up. Did you bring a bottle? Beer? Oh, no. How enterprising!"

"So they burst in on the studio, where the party was reclining desperately on cushions and divans, and Toto was positively jerked to her feet by the sight of them.

"Toto's father has come to take her home," said Percy, and there was some jolly tolerant laughter.

"Dear old-world person!" said Désirée.

"Formidable!" said Lady Wangle, in her best Deauville accent.

"They sat down, splitting a pouffe, next Toto, and waited hopefully for something devilish to happen, but nothing did. The gramophone surged on, one or two danced, and the rest looked old before their time—you know.

Lord Chariot's Gaffe

'Then a young person subsided by Toto and started to talk about table decoration, which was apparently the young person's life-work at the moment.

'Toto brightened up wonderfully. "Too clever," she said. "Just one papier-mâché raspberry, you say, varnished, in an amber dish? Too clever and direct, isn't it, Daddy?"

"Quite," agreed Lord Chariot; "but may I be introduced to this young lady?"

'Well, my lamb,' said Nitocris, 'that rent everything, because the young person was Hereward Gobbins. And he got up and simply cast his cigarette on the floor and strode away to the bar. Poor Toto shuddered. "Oh, take me home, Daddy," she moaned, "take me home. You don't know what you've done!"'

'And what terrible thing had he done?' I asked. 'I mean, it's a mistake that anybody——'

'Well,' said Nitocris, 'Hereward will never speak to Toto again now, and she did want to stay friends with him long enough to find out where he got his hair permanently waved.'

F. G. H. S.

Wingless birds, says a naturalist, are confined to the Southern Hemisphere. He forgets the Soho chicken. (20.6.28.)

RHUM BABAISTS

SEBASTIAN SIMCOX

I have just returned from lunching with young Sebastian Simcox at the 1937 Club. The Club, Simcox told me, was formed last year. It is a mixed Club, the membership being restricted to fifty men and fifty women, who in 1927 were under twenty-five years of age. An indispensable qualification for membership, it seems, is the choice of Art or Literature as a vocation. Another is the possession of an independent unearned income of not less than three hundred pounds a year. And the idea of the club is to make England a better place for artists and writers in 1937 than it was in 1927.

Rhum Babaists

Simcox, who is a founder member, is a blond exquisite of twenty-five. He is a B.A. (it was with difficulty) of Queen's College, Oxford. He is of medium height, very sleek and well brushed, and he affects brown and grey suitings and irreproachable soft hats with pastel-hued linen in discreet harmony. He has a weak chin, which is compensated by a nose of Roman build. I should add that he lives in Bloomsbury with a gaunt elder sister whose absurd name is Amaryl-lis. She stands five feet ten in her stockings and is called Rilly for short. Rilly is a good soul and, in a hushed and bewildered sort of way, an excellent hostess. She adores Sebastian and allows him and his women friends to deck her in incongruous garments and jewels, in which she resembles a flustered cockatoo. That is all there is to Amaryl-lis; there is more, however, to Sebastian, but not much.

There is, primarily and almost exclusively, his poetry. When he first entertained me at the 1937 Club I knew that would come with the coffee. It did, in full spate from a loose-leaf notebook through Simcox's rather red lips for one hour and forty minutes by the club clock. I had been rendered indulgent by the club cocktail, an excellent Liebfraumilch and a Grand Marnier. Also I had nothing much to do and it was raining outside. So I listened: I listened to the theory and applauded, with my eyebrows, the practice. His great aim, Simcox told me, was to achieve that emancipation from tradition, 'that jagged severance from the past which will give the poet's spirit a flame-like nudity of avowal, before which the muttering shibboleths of metre and shambling errors of rhyme will retreat abashed'. At that point he tactfully ordered a second Grand Marnier.

'Just think of me,' Simcox said, 'wasting myself in the composition of deciduous sonnets when the stark freedom of uncloyed and underivative verse lay before me virgin and undefiled. Just think of me.'

I did, and out came the notebook in a flash.

'I rather like this little thing,' he said, with what I can only describe as bashful truculence, and he began the first of twenty-eight and a half poems (not to be confused with poetry). The half-poem occurred at 4.15, when the room was required for a committee meeting. The first poem was announced by Simcox, almost in

Rhum Babaists

accusatory tones, as 'Frog', and I immediately thought of *Mrs. Leo Hunter's*

*'Can I view thee panting, lying
On thy stomach without sighing,
Can I unmoved see thee dying
On a log,
Expiring frog?'*

But Simcox's frog was of a different order entirely. There was nothing leisurely or elegiac about it. It jumped at me in the querulous staccato of its creator's voice like this:

'FROG

*Thou lonely too,
Gazing past reedy actuality beyond
Your world of festering slime?*

*Horizons of illusion!
At thy feet
The mud of satisfaction.*

*Safe—but that lure beyond!
Macadam glistening like water,
Mirage of dark felicity.*

*In your eyes I read it—
You will go, the blind urge calls you;
There will be a thunder and a little squelch
And ends the dream.'*

'Frog,' I gather, is one of Simcox's earliest revolts from the tyranny of tradition. One cannot impugn its sincerity. I could not smile when he told me he had seen the remains of the adventurous amphibian a moment after the lorry had passed on.

Rhum Babaists

It was after writing 'Frog' (in 1926) that Sebastian Simcox heard Miss Gertrude Stein read one of her singularly lucid manifestoes in Paris. Light came to him, as he said, 'like the unshuttering of all the windows in the world'. He scarcely remembers now how he got back to his hotel the next morning. He was intoxicated (I think he said *divinely* intoxicated) and proceeded simultaneously to remove his trousers and write his first poem in the new manner, 'Iconoclastes'. When he awoke later in the morning the poem and his trousers were on the chair by his bed, and, as he brightly said, money in both. Simcox sold 'Iconoclastes' to the wealthy American editor-proprietor of *Ba-Ba* for twenty pounds, *Ba-Ba* of course being the organ of the Parisian coterie who so trenchantly and derisively style themselves Babaists. Here it is, and I think I should experience the same difficulty as Simcox in reading it aloud. At my best I don't sing like a bird, and even if I practise in my bath I shall never be able to make a noise like a fish:

'ICONOCLASTES

Broken light of sunset

yellow glass

the tweed suit of Montmorency in the Bois.

Why do birds

O O O
 O

O

O

O

*You cannot tell me, I
shall never know.*

Why do fishes

— U — U —

— U —

U — U

U

—

Rhum Babaists

*You cannot tell me dumb
traditionalists.*

*My god
this hateful pestilential world!
I will take a buttercup—
hammer of flashing brass—
and smash your mortared vanities.'*

Although Simcox missed the bird and the fish (to vary the usual order) he came in on the buttercup very heavily, and unfortunately upset his coffee over his trousers on the word 'smash'. The immediate effect of this stark and uncompromising poem, as Simcox himself called it, was his election as leader of the 1937 poets, or English Babaists, a position he has held (and has generously consolidated in the restaurant and at the bar) for nearly twelve months. 'Ba-ba! *c'est moi!*' he remarked, and I agreed, receiving a Corona Corona from a passing waiter for being so understanding.

One other poem by Sebastian Simcox may be quoted to support his theory that poetry should be 'nude and passionate and austere'. It is called 'Skyscrapers', and is the only poem he was impelled to write during his stay in the States. As Rilly Simcox said, 'It does give you a definite feeling of going up and up and then coming down and down and down. And that's so exhilarating, don't you agree?'

'SKYSCRAPERS

All God's chillun got wings.
Say, that bell gets me . . .
Anyone for third,
fourth,
fifth,
sixth,
seventh,
eighth.
Going up, Madam,
ninth,
tenth.

Rhum Babaists

*Glory Hallelujah! This nigger's sure
Got a rising job,
First left, second right, walk straight on,
Don't stop ringing till you know they've gone,
eleventh,
twelfth,
Keep your fingers out of the gates there, kid,
thirteenth,
fourteenth,
"Gee, if it should drop!"
Ladies' Hairdressers,
Perfumery shop,
fifteenth,
top,
Sunshine Restaurant,
Down to street,
pass,
pass,
pass,
pass,
ten,
nine,
Going down, Madam,
"Oh, my stomach, how it sinks!"
eighth,
seventh,
Florists in the blue hall by the West Elevator,
pass,
pass,
And the sing-song of the nigger with his finger
on the button
Drones against the shining grilles,
Till a shaft of sunlight smites us
And we step into the street
And we scurry to the Subway
Through a mist and whirr of wheels.*

Rhum Babaists

Woolsteck Building.
Didn't I tell you
All God's chillun got wings!

That I confess I like. It is simple and forthright and self-explanatory. Simcox is obviously a good reporter. More I will not—I cannot—say. But I have promised to dine with him and his sister Rilly next week. There are to be other guests—writers and artists. It should be amusing.

W. K. S.

It was not the scythes on Boadicea's chariot that the Romans disliked so much as her habit of holding out her right hand and then charging to the left. (11.7.28.)

A WALLET AT HIS BACK

My brother Jack was coming to stay with us. 'What can we do to amuse him?' asked Priscilla. 'This is such a dead-and-alive hole.'

'Which do you mean?' I inquired coldly, "'dead" or "alive"?''

'It is an expression meaning "dull",' said Priscilla.

'I have never heard of it,' I said. 'I have no doubt that Jack will take the same simple pleasure in the—er—simple pleasures of the country as I do, or any intelligent person. We do not need to have our pleasures manufactured for us.'

'And how will you take your simple pleasure, please?'

'In the morning we will play a round of golf. In the afternoon we will go for a walk, or, if it is wet, we will——'

'Simply sleep,' said Priscilla, 'or you will go into the garden and dig up simple dandelions with a spud. And on Sunday you will walk down to the Home Farm and simply look at simple animals. Bah!'

'Come, Priscilla,' I said gently, 'do not let us grow bitter. You shall choose our occupation for the evening. We will, if you please, go to the local cinema——'

A Wallet at his Back

'You see, there is nothing——'

'There are trees, my dear,' I said sternly, 'and grass and water and a wind on the heath, brother, sister——'

'In the evening we will play games,' said Priscilla.

I shuddered. Priscilla's games require the most appalling intellectual effort.

'Your quotation,' said Priscilla to me, 'is "Time hath, my lord, a wallet at his back", and the subject you will have to discuss with Jack is the simple pleasures of the country. In the course of your discussion you must bring in the quotation naturally and easily and, as it were, *à propos*. Jack must try to do the same with his quotation. Whoever gets his quotation in first, wins.'

'What is Jack's?' I asked.

'That you must not know,' she said.

We began.

'It is very kind of you to ask me down here,' said Jack.

'Not at all,' I replied. 'I know that you, as I, take a great delight in the SIMPLE PLEASURES OF THE COUNTRY. I have said it!' I added triumphantly to Priscilla.

'That is the subject, fool! not the quotation.'

'Oh! What is the quotation, then?'

She whispered it, and made a tickling noise in my ear.

'Ha! ha! Don't make me laugh!'

'It is not particularly funny,' said Priscilla.

'I didn't hear a word you said, my dear. You tickled.'

'Come into the next room, then——'

'But what is a wallet, Priscilla?'

'Oh, never mind. Get on. You would spoil any game.'

I did my best to get on.

'Will you have a cigarette, Jack, out of my wallet?' I asked.

Jack looked mildly surprised. 'No, thanks. But we were discussing the country. How far is it to the golf-links here? About half a league?'

'Oh, rather more than that. It will be heavy work if we have to carry our golf wallets all the way.'

A Wallet at his Back

'Yes,' said Jack and looked stupid, 'about half a league, half a league,' he repeated idiotically.

'No, rather more than that,' I said strongly. (I felt there was something fishy about that 'half a league'.) 'Rather more than that. But after all it won't matter very much, for the caddies will carry our wallets. The-caddy-will-have-my-lord-a-wallet-at-his-back,' I added with a rush, for fear of losing my chance. 'Nearly got it that time, Priscilla!'

'You are playing this game all wrong,' said Priscilla. 'You shouldn't give a hint of what you have to say until you suddenly bring it out pat, to the consternation of your opponent.'

'I see. All right. But just keep Jack off his half a leagues, will you?' and, casually strolling up to the clock, with my back to the audience, I did a clever thing, and then, turning, said, 'I wonder what the time is?'

'Well, you can see for yourself, can't you?' asked Jack. 'Besides what has that got to do with the country?'

'A lot of things,' I replied. 'Time goes very slowly in the country, in spite of its simple pleasures.'

'Not at all,' said Jack with suspicious eagerness. 'It goes, on the contrary, very fast—about half a league, half a league—'

'One moment!' I interrupted. 'There is something strange here, behind this clock. Would you be so good as to see what it is, Jack?'

Jack gave me a searching glance, and gingerly put his hand behind the clock.

'A pocket-book,' he said, producing it.

'How strange!' I exclaimed, and then quite naturally, as it were *à propos*, 'One might almost say TIME HATH, MY LORD, A WALLET AT HIS BACK. My game, I think!'

'Humph!' said Priscilla.

An easy game. Jack is still muttering 'half a league' all over the house. I wonder what he was driving at! I must remember to ask Priscilla.

T. E.

The Thriller

Policemen in Munich fine you a shilling on the spot for throwing litter about and give you a receipt. If you throw the receipt away, that's another shilling. (8.8.28.)

THE THRILLER

Three weeks ago my friend Chester lent me (almost by force) a book called *The Bloodstained Marzipan*. I admit that originally I had no intention of reading it, and what made me succumb in the end was its coloured jacket, upon which a scene of truly horrible fascination was depicted in brilliant red and green on the customary yellow background. To-day when Chester burst into my room without warning, he discovered me reading in a state of agreeable horror. The lurid yellow jacket of my book had fallen at my feet; I was bending forward, with my hair on end and my eyes dilated; my pipe had gone out. Chester observed all this with great satisfaction as he stood at the door.

'Ah,' he remarked, '*The Bloodstained Marzipan* is thrilling, isn't it?'

'It is,' I replied.

'Makes your hair stand on end, doesn't it?' he asked. He was obviously anxious about this.

'It does,' I replied.

'Positively baffling, isn't it?'

'Rather,' I replied, 'but——'

'Oh,' said Chester, smiling tolerantly, 'I daresay you think you know who did it. I daresay you think the grim and inscrutable Oriental, *Ung Ping*, did it.'

By this time my hair had completely subsided.

'I do not,' I replied, relighting my pipe. 'I have no suspicions whatever of the grim and inscrutable Oriental, *Ung Ping*. I always ignore grim and inscrutable Orientals like *Ung Ping* on principle. They used to take me in terribly, but now I see through them with ease. They seem to think almost anything's worth being grim and inscrutable over. I don't mind it if they've committed a murder but

The Thriller

there was a Chink in a book I was reading the other day who, let alone being grim and inscrutable, was always narrowing his eyes to slits; and it came out in the end that all he knew was the winner of the 2.30. I mean to say——'

'Well, then,' he proceeded, 'it's pretty certain you have your suspicions of *Edwin Higgup*, the young man who stands to gain a cool hundred thousand.'

'I do not suspect *Edwin Higgup*,' I replied. 'Most certainly not. I never give a second thought——'

'Gave,' he corrected gently.

'I never give a second thought,' I repeated with dignity, 'to people who stand to gain any cool sum of money. But if, for instance, he had sat down to gain, say, a warm sixty-nine thousand, seven hundred and forty-three, that would put an entirely new complexion on the matter. I——'

'Well,' he broke in, 'I suppose in your opinion then it was *Randolph Maltravers*?'

'I believe *Randolph Maltravers* to be as innocent,' I replied, 'as a suckling babe. Surely, Chester, you give me credit for more brains than the other characters in the book? The young man is suspected by everybody; their unanimity is almost indecent. You don't suggest——'

'Well,' he interrupted, 'who else is there?'

'*Brian Mastertree*,' I said.

'What!' cried Chester with pretended scorn. 'The distinguished scientist—you don't believe *he* did it?'

'I *know* he did it,' I replied firmly.

'Do you mean to tell me——'

'Certainly,' I said. 'I read *The Bloodstained Marzipan* last week. This is *The Fatal Sewing-Machine* I've got here.'

R. M.

BUS CONDUCTORS

I know the police are delightful, '

I know that they keep me from harm;

Bus Conductors

*They're truly seraphic in handling the traffic--
But give me conductors for charm.*

*The drivers of taxis are marvels,
And, though they alarm me a bit,
Their ways of abusing are apt and amusing—
But give me conductors for wit.*

*Oh, often I think a conductor
Would just be the husband for me,
So kind and so funny (and regular money)—
But I fear that it never can be.*

R. F.

The opponents of Prohibition ought to remember that it has made the Americans the greatest travellers in the world. (15.8.28.)

PUTTING THINGS RIGHT

To the Editor of 'The Scrutineer'.

Sir,—In his charming and well-informed article, 'Ancient Buildings of Slowshire'—published in your last issue, Mr. Squiggell falls into error in one particular. He refers to the ruined east wall of the old Tithe Barn (now demolished) at Pokesly as being situated 'about one hundred and fifty yards from the village pump'. In August, 1872, when a boy of twelve, I stayed in Pokesly for a fortnight and well remember passing both the pump and the remains of the old Tithe Barn on several occasions. They were at least four hundred yards apart.

I am sure Mr. Squiggell, whose delightful article greatly interested me, will forgive me for venturing, in the interests of historical accuracy, to correct him on this point.

J. M. Soapied.

Putting Things Right

To the Editor of 'The Scrutineer'.

Sir,—May I be allowed to call attention to a *lapsus calami* in Professor Soapied's admirable letter in your last issue? On reference to *Who's Who*, I find that he was born in June, 1859, so that in August, 1872, when he visited Pokesly, he was not twelve but thirteen years of age.

Professor Soapied, whose meticulous accuracy is of such great value to students of history, will, I am confident, pardon my presumption in noting this solitary little slip.

Leslie Partwinger.

To the Editor of 'The Scrutineer'.

Sir,—Mr. Partwinger, whose interesting letter appeared in your last issue, is a little misleading in his reference to a *lapsus calami* on the part of Professor Soapied. Professor Soapied for some years past has dictated *all* his correspondence to his very competent secretary and it is then typed.

Veritas.

To the Editor of 'The Scrutineer'.

Sir,—Your correspondent 'Veritas' has himself tripped in writing of 'Mr.' Partwinger instead of Miss Partwinger, the authoress of that very charming story for children, 'Lucinda's Two Mugs'.

Miss Partwinger, whose work merits far greater recognition than it has yet achieved, lives in a delightful cottage in Migsworth, Midfolk, and is, I understand, engaged on another book in the same *genre*.

Adelaide Scales.

To the Editor of 'The Scrutineer'.

Sir,—The village of Migsworth is situated, not in Midfolk, but just over the border, in Hemshire. The county boundary at this point follows the course of the little river Slyme, and Migsworth lies entirely on the western bank of that beautiful stream.

Miss (or Mrs.) Scales does well in claiming attention for that talented writer, Miss Partwinger, and will, I know, accept my correction in the spirit in which it is offered.

Hemshire Native.

Putting Things Right

To the Editor of 'The Scrutineer'.

Sir,—I really must protest against 'Hemshire Native's' description of the river Slyme as a 'beautiful stream'. From its source in a marsh near Muckfield to its junction with the river Swug it is entirely devoid of beauty, and its only claim to distinction is the fact that a bittern (*Botaurus Stellaris*) was ruthlessly shot near its banks as recently as 1913 by a local farmer.

B. S. Jagg.

To the Editor of 'The Scrutineer'.

Sir,—The man responsible for the shooting of a bittern by the river Slyme in 1913 was not a farmer, but a gamekeeper, who now resides in Scotland and, to his credit, has never ceased to regret his action. Mr. Jagg, whose opinion is entitled to the deepest respect, will, I am sure, be glad to have this assurance. British farmers as a body are genuine sportsmen, notwithstanding misguided witticisms in the comic papers.

Rus.

To the Editor of 'The Scrutineer'.

Sir,—Surely 'Rus' is mistaken in suggesting that the comic papers habitually impugn the sportsmanship of British farmers. The propensity of the latter to grumbling has been the subject of many jokes, but I do not recollect any tendency on the part of our humorists, pictorial or otherwise, to depict the farmer as a bad or even indifferent sportsman.

Ernest Y. Strabe.

(This correspondence must now cease. I can't think how it was ever allowed to begin.—Ed.)

R. F. W.

New uses are being suggested for the vegetable marrow. One is to apply hair-restorer and let it win prizes as a giant gooseberry. (29.8.28.)

Double-Faced Conduct

DOUBLE-FACED CONDUCT

Henry had reached that fatuous stage of courtship when he knew that he was going to propose to Marjorie, and Marjorie knew that he was too. But from the afternoon he put it off until the evening and from the evening he put it off until to-morrow—the perfect lover. Marjorie also behaved as a good lover. That is, she made up her mind that it was going to be 'Yes' one morning, doubted it the next day, became certain it was going to be 'No', and then changed her mind again.

They were both in this unbalanced condition while they were staying at a place which we will call Prawnton-by-the-Sea. Marjorie and her mother were there on holiday. Henry had run down to be near Marjorie, making some inadequate excuse about overwork.

Prawnton has a popular shore—what you and I would call the vulgar end of the town—and a select shore. Henry's mental state forced him to take solitary walks when Marjorie was not available; and one day on the popular shore he fell in with a seedy-looking gentleman with something to sell.

The rascal had obviously taken a course in salesmanship. He oozed with the forceful personality, the persuasive manner, the cogent fluency developed by twelve correspondence lessons. What he sold was a florin bearing two tails. It says much for Henry's imbecile state that he paid five shillings for it; but something must be allowed for the vendor's convincing methods.

'Imagine it,' he had said. 'You are talking to the Dook and 'is Grice says, "Thirsty weather," 'e says. "You 'ave one with me," says you, "and we'll toss oo pies." Up goes the 'arf-dollar and before 'e can say anything you does the callin'. "Tiles," you says—and tiles it'll be.'

It was satisfactory to be credited with a ducal friend and not less so to contemplate this ducal friend as a perpetual payer. But, when the vendor had disappeared and his oily tongue wagged no more, Henry looked at his new coin as a white and possibly dangerous elephant.

You would have thought that for one day Henry had by now been foolish enough or wise enough—according to your point of

Double-Faced Conduct

view. But he hadn't. That same evening he proposed to Marjorie.

Marjorie balanced herself precariously on her fence and refused to come down.

'I like you enormously,' she said, adopting the usual lover's gambit, 'but do I like you enough? I can't answer you to-day. I must go for a long solitary walk to-morrow morning, and perhaps in the evening I can say "Yes" or "No".'

Marjorie didn't put it quite so crisply as this. There were delicious little hesitations and shynesses which absolutely ravished poor Henry. But you have the pith of what she said.

I think Henry put a rose in his buttonhole when he called the next evening. At any rate he had tied his tie with care. Marjorie looked lovelier than ever. Little blushes chased each other over her face. Not carrot-like blushes, but little pink things like the shyer petals of the rose that, I think, was in Henry's buttonhole. But she gave Henry a shock.

'I can't make up my mind,' she said.

'But, my dear, dear Marjorie,' murmured Henry—or words to that effect.

'I'll tell you what I've decided to do,' she went on; 'I'm going to toss up.'

Can you look into Henry's guilty mind and note it recalling the words of the salesman: 'Up goes the 'arf-dollar. "Tiles," you calls --and tiles it'll be?'

'Yes, Marjorie, yes,' he said excitedly, grappling with an idea. 'If I win you'll be mine?'

'Very nearly that. Take this coin to toss with.'

She thrust a two-shilling piece upon him.

Determined to keep command of the game, Henry made a cunning substitution and held his own special two-tailed coin in his hands.

'Now,' cried Marjorie, almost as excited as he was, 'I call. If I'm right I'll marry you.'

Henry protested. She brushed his protests aside.

'Either that, or it's all off,' she said.

His heart sank. He knew he would have to toss with his two-

Double-Faced Conduct

tailed coin, and there was only the half-chance of her calling as he would wish. Still, there *was* the half-chance. He tossed.

'Heads!' shouted Marjorie hysterically and buried her face in her hands.

She had to unbury it, because Henry did nothing except hold out a flat palm with a coin in it.

'Tails,' he said gloomily.

If he had been even glancing at Marjorie he would have seen her air of consternation. Presently he did look at her, and those two wretched mortals must have wasted a full minute gazing into each other's eyes.

Then Marjorie took the fatal coin and turned it over. She turned it over several times, hardly able to believe what she saw on both sides.

'Did you,' she faltered—'did you go for a walk on the beach? Did you—did you—meet a man—and—buy a florin from him?'

'Yes, a florin with two tails.'

'The one I bought,' said Marjorie, 'had two heads.'

Henry watched the rose-petal blushes chase each other again across her cheeks. He was spell-bound! He burst free from the spell.

'Marjorie!' he cried—or, words to that effect.

H. O. S. W.

A doctor suggests that we need a new slogan for Christmas. For ourselves we are content with the old one 'Bismuth as usual.'
(26.12.28.)

PEOPLE I DON'T LIKE (*The Misanthrope's Mixed Bag*)

*People who live on uncooked roots;
People who dote on viols and lutes;
People who go to bed in their boots.*

*People who keep outlandish pets,
Kinkajous and marmosets;
People who talk of serviettes.*

People I Don't Like

*People who are not pleased but 'enchanted',
Who say when you apologise, 'granted',
People who speak of the dead as 'planted'.*

*Grandmamas with Eton crops;
Grandpapas who perform at 'hops';
People with hands like cold pork chops.*

*People who eat their cheese with a knife;
People who never say 'five' but 'fife',
And talk of 'the kiddies' and 'the wife'.*

*Gilded youths with a permanent wave,
Oiled and curled and sleek and suave,
Men of the lounge, not men of the cave.*

*Girls whose charm is solely dental;
'People' who advertise as 'gentle';
People who claim to be temperamental.*

*People in dread of growing fatter;
People whose talk is an endless chatter
Of things that don't begin to matter.*

*People who call for the lash and scourge
Until their literature they purge
From clichés such as 'awareness' and 'urge'.*

*People who whistle in railway trains;
People who sully our country lanes
With broken bottles and petrol stains.*

*People who dance on escalators;
People who swear at hard-worked waiters;
Bishops with badly buttoned gaiters.*

C. L. G.

First Aid for Last Nights

FIRST AID FOR LAST NIGHTS

When the curtain falls upon the final performance of a really successful play, it rises again to disclose a line of applicants for our applause. And sometimes we Say It With Flowers, after which the Leading Man and/or Actor-manager tells us in broken fragments how He Counts Himself in Nothing Else So Happy as (something something) Remembering His Good Friends.

Now this sort of thing argues practice. Only the seasoned actor can bring in Shakespeare. The novice says merely, 'Thankyouall-awfullyforyourerrmm,' or is dragged on and bows, or is pushed off, foaming with aphasia. And, whether he speaks or is dumb, the novice is an offence to the eye.

He stands on his instep with the other foot; he hooks his heel in period furniture; his hands swell visibly to the size and colour of beef sausages; he emits remote neighs which any probationer would instantly diagnose as hysteria and be very gentle with, combining a firmness of manner with doses of sal volatile; he glares glassily and cuts his own mother in Box A; he forgets to hand the leading lady about; he clears his throat, saying Kerrr-mmm; he bangs into the *jeune premier* and, where tabs are employed, loses the parting in the curtain, beating it with impotent frenzy until it opens six feet away and he is removed in a haze of dust.

The trouble is that he is pretending an ease of manner while in a panic. Whereas the secret and profound art of making a Last-Night Speech lies in feigning a diffidence you do not feel. I have watched the expert so often that I know the drill by heart. But the novice does not appear to have made a study of the art. I have therefore prepared a brochure upon the subject for the guidance of one who is new to the business, whether he be leading man or author of the play.

The main feature of this pamphlet will be not so much the actual speech itself—which should indeed be used sparingly in case audiences begin to recognize it—as the full stage directions for gesture as the need for it arises. For I notice that, though the Last-Night Speech may vary, its accompanying antics are of all time.

At the fall of the curtain the novice should wait until it has risen

First Aid for Last Nights

again three times rapidly. At the first cries of 'Speech, speech!' smile once as curtain rises and remains up. When calls continue, look R., smiling shyly, and L., smiling as though with incredulity, murmuring some informal impromptu to your nearest neighbour. N.B.—The remark must be inaudible from the stalls, and the words, 'Not at all, not at all', will be found helpful. Sibilants should be avoided. Such sentences as 'Six Silent Sprats' are useful only in crowd work, revolutionary scenes, etc. When calls become insistent, novice must wait until he is (laughingly) pushed towards the footlights, when his manner should undergo the following changes:

- (1) A certain sincerity.
- (2) An unassuming simplicity.
- (3) A readiness to enter into the spirit of the evening combined with a fundamental belief in the Sacredness of the Drama as an Educative Force. Eyes twinkling, but mouth serious and even sad. Hands lightly clasped in front or behind, optional.

THE SPEECH

(Measured, gentle, resonant and tinged with melancholy.)

Ladies and Gentlemen (*look down*), I cannot hope (*looking swiftly up to the gallery*) to express to you (*pause*) to-night (*R. hand at tie*) the intense happiness (*smiling whimsically, as though at the extravagance of the expression of what is nevertheless a very real emotion*) you have given not only to myself, but to (*looking R. and L.*) my loyal colleague. (*If wife is in cast reach for her hand. If not, a slight bow to leading lady. Pause for manifestations from the audience.*)

The play may be the thing (*pause for audience to recognize and murmur at partial quotation, and roguish smile when it does*), but, my friends, if I may call you so? (*pause for anything that may happen; cover it, if nothing does, by unobtrusive cough*), you perhaps have never considered how much, how very much, I might almost say how very, very much depends upon that team work (*pause*), that co-operation (*pause*) selflessness in which each sinks each for the good of all which is absolutely essential (*taking off pince-nez, or, if sight is normal, removing handkerchief from pocket and lightly touching nose with it*) to that perfection which (*keep your head here*) even if not

First Aid for Last Nights

achieved—and which of us sights the Promised Land of the Realized Ideal? Are we not in this respect a very tribe of Moseses?—has been at least the aim (*shy smile*), the ambition (*shy smile*), and the hope of all of us to-night. (*Long pause for demonstrations, during which face should be fond, gaze a little absent.*) But (*briskly*) it is late and I will detain you no further. Ladies and Gentlemen, I cannot leave you (*manly smile, instantly quenched*) without saying a line or two that your wonderful sympathy and encouragement (*replacing handkerchief*) have suddenly put me in mind of. They run (*draw yourself up, assume that self-denying manner which indicates that you are about to deliver yourself of the lines of another. Face very noble.* N.B. If actor, give audience brief sight of the better profile of the two before beginning. Voice unnatural and audible. The actual quotation can be selected at leisure beforehand, but the below-mentioned are recommended:

(a) 'By God, I am not covetous for gold' (*Henry V*); or merely

(b) 'Parting is such sweet sorrow' (*Romeo and Juliet*).—N.B.—'Farewell, a long farewell to all my greatness' (*Henry VIII*) is suitable only to actors on complete retirement from stage.

When in sight of conclusion of quotation, rapid glance to prompt corner, four quick little stamps backwards up stage, and last words delivered with head tossed back boyishly, eyes on gallery. Smile challenging, mouth slightly open, as curtain descends. When curtain rises finally, bow three times rapidly and a little stiffly, finally allowing the head to remain sunk upon the breast until you are blotted out for good.

R. F. (*Rachel*)

A writer says that the strict father still exists. We know of one who insists on his children being home for breakfast. (23.1.29.)

OUR LEGAL PANTOMIME

'Ipswich Police Court, in Ipswich Town Hall, has one arresting distinction, a disappearing dock. When Quarter Sessions are held

Our Legal Pantomime

the dock emerges through a trap-door in the floor, like the demon king in pantomime.'—*Daily Paper*.)

What enchanting possibilities are here opened up! Could not this idea, with suitable elaboration, spread to our London Law Courts? Until our Judges are broken in to this innovation I have deliberately selected a well-known matter of contention from our story-books, viz., a portion of *Jack and the Beanstalk*, as an example of what might be done with more humdrum actions. And for this occasion I suggest that Mr. Norman Birkett, as Counsel for the Prosecution (*Demon*), might attach some sparkling batswings to his gown, and perhaps place a trifle of tinfoil upon his eyelids—always a terrific effect. And Mr. Justice Ivory (as *Good Fairy*) would do well to set a trembling star upon his wig, and the formality of his bands could perhaps be relieved by an encrustation of diamanté. His wand should be topped by a pair of electric-lit scales, representing equity (the battery being hid in his sleeve).

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The Spirit of Mercy (*Counsel for the Defence*).

Dame Durden (*Plaintiff*).

Jack, her son (*Defendant*).

Truculano (*Demon; Counsel for the Prosecution*) Norman Birkett,
K.C.

Justitia (*Good Fairy; Judge*) Mr. Justice Ivory.

The Associate of Court 8. Chorus of Mixed Jury.

SCENE: *Interior of Court 8. Enter Jury, dancing.*

First Member of Jury. They won't exempt my deafness, but with care
Bits of the case I'll pick up here and there.

Second do. My plea was moral, based on reasoned fury,
That lives and fates are settled by a jury.

(*An enormous book, marked 'Common Law', is pushed in. It opens and JUSTITIA emerges and occupies the Bench in the middle of a golden spot-light. THE SPIRIT OF MERCY is seen in a smaller spot-light. TRUCULANO springs out of a star-trap and stands bathed in green limes.*)

Our Legal Pantomime

Truculano.

This case, Justitia, I would have you know,
Concerns a widow, antecedents low,
Who brings an action, hingeing on a cow,
Against her son, John Durden, who, I vow,
Exchanged the beast for beans, *sans* explanation,
A deed that must evoke our condemnation.
Thus pondered malice (of the type *pre pense*)
Has justly outraged her maternal sense.
A hasty bargain Durden cannot plead
With Giles, the farmer—here's the written deed,
In which John Durden, plainly contumacious,
Yields ruminant for seedlings farinaceous.
Further, it seems that when he comes of age
Defendant gains a goodly heritage.
My client claims, ere pleading be too late,
Her damages and costs from said estate.
Consider, first, Defendant's state of mind;
He looks in health, and yet—what do we find?
We find, Justitia, that a former Durden
Of sundry inhibitions bore the burden.
Nightly he dreamed a giant thundered 'FEE!'——
A barrister, no doubt. (*Laughter.*)

Justitia.

Truculano.

This is my plea:
*What inference in this enlightened day
Would doctors draw?*

Justitia.

I really couldn't say.
In Court too often are my ears annoyed
At hearing ev'ry crime explained by Freud,
While Coué's claims, enormous and unbounded,
Depress me much. I think them most unfounded.

CHORUS: *The Jury.*

To punish bad sperrits and deal on its merits
With evidence no one is fitter;
Yet he'd like to *conspuer* the precepts of Coué
Which Ivory day and in Ivory way
Make him bitter and bitter and bitter!

Our Legal Pantomime

Spirit of Mercy. The widow Durden, when her son returned,
Became abusive, all excuses spurned.

(Dame Durden is put in the witness-box.)

Dame. Daisy, me cow (she's brindled, with a spot),
The only valuable I had got,
I sent with Jack to put 'er up the spout,
AND WHATYER THINK?

Justitia. Dear lady, do not shout.

Dame. 'Ho,' says the boy, 'the farmer's bought our Daisy
For all these jolly beans.' *I think 'e's crazy.*

Justitia. Theories are quite invalid as defence;
The things you *think* in law aren't evidence.

(The spot-light picks out JACK DURDEN sitting in the Court.)

Spirit of Mercy. Cringe, Truculano, for your reign is short!

Truculano. My dear Sir, I'll do nothing of the sort;
And, what is more, when *you* are sent on circuit
I shall be here! They all want Norman Birkett.

(He laughs horribly and tosses a small fire-ball into the air.)

Jack. *(sobbing.)* In Daisydimple village we are needy;

Even the cow was starving, thin and seedy,
An', when I found that Farmer Giles would pay—

Truculano. Be very, very careful what you say.
This 'bill of sale' that you so rashly signed
Distinctly says 'For beans', not cash, you'll find.

Spirit of Mercy. What *kind* of beans were these, pray tell the Bench—
Butter? Or Horse? Or Runner? Broad or French?

Justitia. What is the point the learned sprite would raise?

Spirit of Mercy. Just this: the Jury soon will give its praise
To sense and wit. Defendant knows, I think?

Jack. The beans? Oh, runners—sorter black-an'-pink.

Spirit of Mercy. Runners. Precisely. Nourishing and light,
And rich in vitamins, so doctors write.

Justitia. The laws on agriculture plainly state
You plant them early (lest they come up late).

Our Legal Pantomime

Spirit of Mercy. Quite so, quite so; their value is specific;
They yield a paying crop and most prolific.
The fact disposes of the charge of spite
Against defendant. He knew that all right.
Next point: On oath Jack swears the cow was
meagre

Through under-feeding. No one would be eager
To offer any but a wretched bid
That would not keep the Durdens if they did;
Whereas the beans with endless multiplying,
Will prove a source of income gratifying.
What did Jack do? With brain acutely bright
He got the bargain signed in black and white,
Disproving finally a mind demented
(A theory which my learned Fiend presented).
Now, Jury-members, to your common sense
I trust this lad with firmest confidence.
(*Tenderly.*) Parents there are among you, it may be,
And could you cause this mental agony
To *your* young boys that Plaintiff brought to Jack
When on his thoughtful deed she turned her back?
You weep—a greater tribute than your smiles. . . .
Foiled! Foiled! And by those perjured crocodiles!
Our verdict's this: The Dame we will requite
And damages bestow—a farthing bright.
No lien on Jack's fortune shall she claim.

Truculano.
Jury.

Dame.
Associate.
Justitia.

You nasty brutes!
Here is your farthing, Dame.
Breaches are sad, but I am here to heal 'em.
Fiat Justitia! (also *ruat coelum*).

(JUSTITIA'S throne is suddenly outlined in coloured lights. The ASSOCIATE and JURY throw crackers to the public as JUSTITIA stands blowing kisses under a rain of rose-leaves from the roof.)

R. F. (*Rachel*)

Jane and Michael

JANE AND MICHAEL

*She's six years old and he is three,
This little girl and boy,
And he it is who sees that she
Obtains the favourite toy—
The gun, the fairy-cycle,
The soldiers or the train—
For what you give to Michael
Always goes to Jane.*

*When Michael does what Michael mayn't,
I smack the usual part,
And Jane looks on a trifle faint
With palpitating heart;
And every blow I strike'll
Result in double pain,
For what you give to Michael
Always goes to Jane.*

J. M. S.

THE PLOT REVEALED

Not so long ago a dramatist expressed a desire to see dramatic critics replaced by reporters, who would merely give a straightforward account of the plot of the play. This, I confess, struck me as a very excellent suggestion. So, after seeing the farce, *The Wrong Wife* (adapted from the French), I sat up till two in the morning writing a straightforward account of the plot, as an example of how the thing should be done. And here it is.

The theme of the play is that Gustave, who is carrying on with the pretty chambermaid Julie—at least, she is supposed to be the chambermaid, but is really the divorced wife of Gustave's friend, Henri, now married to Elise, who has an affair with Gustave's secretary, Georges, who is making love to Jeanette, Gustave's wife, although she is not in love with him but is merely afraid he will

The Plot Revealed

expose her conduct with Adolphe (whose real name is Auguste), who has taken the flat below in order to be near her, though he is now married to Julie—Gustave, as I was about to say, who before his marriage, that is, his present marriage, for it transpires that he had previously been married twice, having been divorced by both wives, one of whom, Sylvaine, is now the *chère amie* of Léon, who has lost his memory in a railway accident—well, he is supposed to have lost his memory, but really, it appears, it was a trick to escape from his mistress, Suzanne, who, having discovered the trickery, has followed him to Paris disguised as a hairdresser's assistant, and arranges with Henri, who is pretending to be Gustave, to stay at the Hotel Bon-Bon, where, strangely enough, Jeannette and Adolphe are also going to stay at the same time—Gustave, I repeat, who before his marriage with Jeannette has been more than friendly with Lou-Lou, and, on being threatened with an incriminating letter by Gaby, who has been shown to his flat by mistake, instead of to the flat of Adolphe, who is responsible for her twins—or rather is supposed to be responsible, for it turns out that the whole thing is a put-up job after all—Gustave, then, who by the way imagines that his wife is out of town (she is really hiding in the bedroom of Georges, who, hearing footsteps which he thinks are Gustave's, climbs out of the window and enters the room of Elise, whom he finds in her pyjamas with Léon, who has entered her room under the impression that it is Sylvaine's, and believes Georges to be Gustave, whom he has met (or thinks he has met, for it was really Henri)—well, Gustave, as I was explaining, thinking that she (that is, Gaby) is Lou-Lou, and finding that Jeannette, who has discovered the infidelity (as she thinks) of her husband (really of Henri) with Julie (as she supposes), though it is in fact the hairdresser (that is, Suzanne), imagines that she (that is, Lou-Lou—really, of course, Gaby) is—Well, anyhow, go and see it for yourself.

G. F. L.

The Ex-Kaiser has told a newspaper interviewer that he will never visit England. That makes it unanimous. (6.2.29.)

At a Charity Dinner

AT A CHARITY DINNER

Showing Why I donated as Little as I did

The Chairman, in a terse and lucid speech which made no pretence of discharging what is vulgarly known as 'hot air', had set forth the achievements of the Institution for which he was appealing and its claims upon our generosity. At the close of his remarks I said to myself, 'This is a great Cause and merits my humble support. I shall do what I can for it—and rather more. There is no virtue in giving unless you give beyond your means.'

In front of every guest lay a blank cheque, together with a letter addressed to the Chairman saying that he (the guest) was contributing the sum of —— guineas (mere pounds, it appeared, would not be tolerated.) Mentally I filled in my cheque, instructing my bankers to increase my overdraft to the extent of twenty guineas in favour of the Charity. I did not actually fill it in, because I thought it possible that, in the course of some subsequent speech, so poignant an appeal might be made to my emotions that I should be compelled to enlarge this amount.

Then followed an oration—its reader was obviously a plutocrat—which hinted that an extra cipher or two on his cheque ought not to cause anybody present any sensible inconvenience. This put me off. I said to myself, 'If there is to be a competition between millionaires, my paltry gift will be but a drop in their ocean. A reduction of that drop by ten guineas will make no appreciable difference.' And (mentally again) I changed my figure from twenty to ten.

Meanwhile the speaker was becoming prolix, and my heart grew colder and colder. For every minute that he persisted I determined to reduce my donation by half a guinea. This arrangement brought it down to five guineas, though I raised it to six out of sheer gratitude for my relief when he resumed his seat.

The next speaker spoke without a typescript, and this pleased me so much that in a spasm of appreciation I credited the Charity with an additional guinea, adding yet another when he made a joke. But he too became prolix, and as the evening wore on he produced interminable statistics showing that there was nothing of its

At a Charity Dinner

kind in the world that could begin to compare with the Institution in whose honour we had been eating and drinking. I said to myself: 'If its claims need to be rubbed in like this it cannot be so worthy of my support as I imagined. On the other hand, if its records are so overwhelming as the speaker makes out, then at least one hundred thousand of the public, on reading his speech in the morning papers, will send donations averaging two guineas a head.'

Greatly impressed by these two conflicting arguments, I reduced my own contribution to that figure.

And there it might have remained but for certain further influences, one favourable to the Cause, and two hostile. An impromptu speech, very brief and gay, put me in a good humour, and I said to myself, 'This speech comes too late, and is anyhow too excellent, to be reported. I have, therefore, enjoyed an advantage over tomorrow's public who are going to subscribe an average of two guineas. I shall give three.'

Then came a tedious Vote of Thanks, stuffed with *clichés*, that reduced my heart to a state of petrification and my cheque back again to two guineas.

Finally, the Toast-master got on my nerves. I had come to loathe his unctuous announcements, 'praying silence for Knights of the Most Distinguished Order of the British Empire' (heavens!). And by the end the cumulative effect of his utterances was nearly fatal, as far as I was concerned, to the Charity which he was supposed to be serving by his ministrations.

You may say that his performance had nothing to do with the merits of the Cause. I reply by asking what a Charity wants with a dinner at all unless its design is to appeal to the heart through the physical senses. And I say that the Toast-master helped to undo for me the good work of the turtle-soup and the champagne. I decided to give only £1.

But a reference to the printed form reminded me that the unit was a guinea, and that the plural was obligatory. So I was about to fill in my cheque for the minimum sum admissible—one and a half guineas—when a friend at my side, who was too deaf to have heard the speakers, or even the Toast-master, consulted me. 'What,' he

At a Charity Dinner

asked, speaking much louder, as deaf people will, than he knew—
'what ought one to give? Twenty guineas?'

If I was to make him hear, my reply, like his question, would have to be audible up to a range of ten yards. In the circumstances I had no alternative but to shout, 'That's what I had thought of giving.'

This was strictly true.

I then wrote out my cheque for one and a half guineas.

O. S.

A hen belonging to a farmer at Ribchester has laid an egg weighing six ounces. We think the hen did the right thing with it. (6.2.29.)

LIBRARY CHAIRS

(A Jolly Game for Adults)

Before we moved into our new house my wife dwelt a good deal on the advantage of being so near a well-equipped Public Library, remarking that in her opinion I had spent a good deal too much on the purchase of the better-class magazines and reviews. Now, as she pointed out, I should only have to walk a few hundred yards to skim the cream of contemporary thought. That was what she meant. What she said was, 'You'll be quite happy there, frowsting, while I get some golf.' And I, knowing no better, agreed.

Yesterday for the first time I entered the reading-room. I am not a fresh-air fiend, but it struck me that my wife for once had hit on the right word. The place seemed very full. The reviews and illustrated weeklies were clamped to the desks like so many chained Bibles, and their names were printed on boards like the names of cows over the stalls in a model dairy.

I soon saw that all my favourites were engaged; in fact the only periodicals available were, *The Vegetarian News*, *The Feathered World*, and *The Exchange and Mart*. I sat down to this last and studied its columns while waiting for a stout man who was buried

Library Chairs

in *Cornhill* to get up and go. I was becoming mildly interested in the probable reactions of the advertiser who wanted to exchange a set of poets bound in limp calf for a saxophone when the stout man rose. I rose also, but not quickly enough. The lady who had been scanning *The Lancet* with well-feigned interest executed an adroit flanking movement and slid into the vacant chair before I could reach it.

Baulked, I looked about me for a better strategic position. *The Feathered World* was now occupied by a reader who, neglecting his opportunity to learn a cure for the gapes in fowls, was looking wistfully in the direction of *The Graphic*, and my present choice was limited to a weekly whose main features were pictures of actresses, beauty hints, and full instructions for cutting out a three-piece set of undies, and to a publication called *The Allotment-Holder*, and *Rabbits for Profit*. The former was near *The Fortnightly*, but not, I feared, near enough. I am out of training and I distrusted my ability to leap the ten or twelve feet intervening when the moment to do so arrived. I therefore selected *The Allotment-Holder*, which was ideally situated between *The National Review* and *The London Mercury*. I sat down, prepared to hurl myself in either direction, and affecting to read an article on how to plant parsnips.

Then the unexpected happened. My neighbours on either side rose simultaneously and moved away. I hesitated between the two vacancies, and my hesitation was fatal. A middle-aged lady, who had been toying with *The Builder*, pounced on *The London Mercury*, while a big man of ferocious aspect instantly abandoned *Crochet and Tatting*, No. 72 of *The Needlewoman*, and secured *The National Review*.

I got up and looked about me. I might sit down, if I liked, to *The Fretworker*, which was near *Punch*. If I had been a younger and stronger man I should have tried again. But I had had 'flu not so long ago and my spirit was broken. I went home.

But I quite see that, viewed as a game, there is something to be said for Library Chairs. When I feel stronger I daresay I shall play again.

M. D.

Outposts of Empire

The craze for stealing the mascots from motor-cars is spreading. Care should be taken to shake off any two-seater that may be adhering to them. (20.2.29.)

OUTPOSTS OF EMPIRE

George's Lion

George has had his photo taken standing over a very dead lion, and he has sent a copy of it home to the Vicarage, together with the skin.

He says that, though he didn't actually shoot the lion, he probably would have done if Van Blerk, our local big-game hunter, hadn't shot it first, and anyway his mother wouldn't be interested in minor details like that. On the back of the photo George has written, 'My first lion. Nukuku, Central Africa, March, 1928'. The lion really is his, of course, because he paid Van Blerk ten pounds for it, so that no one can accuse George of inaccuracy. He is a bit of a stickler for detail, as a matter of fact, and it isn't his fault if his mother tells all her visitors that George shot the hearthrug in the drawing-room. Women always jump to conclusions.

George might have shot the lion. As it turned out he might even have trampled it to death, and I am inclined to think that the beast was lucky in only meeting Van Blerk. But in any case it simply asked for trouble by suddenly developing a taste for piccanins and old ladies. Nukuku is fairly used to that, and as a general rule it takes the sudden disappearance of its elderly females with commendable calm.

But when Leo so far forgot himself as to devour a complete witch-doctor, magic tokens and all, the district realised that something ought to be done about it, as it was felt that a lion which had swallowed the whole pharmacopoeia, so to speak, might become bewitched itself and cause all kinds of trouble. Confirmation was given to this view when various villages reported respectively the loss of two donkeys, three piccanins, one old woman, several goats and two cows. It was the cows that did it, the general opinion being

Outposts of Empire

that this was unforgivable, and a deputation called on us to enlist our aid.

Man-eating lions had never appealed to me as potential victims of my hunting skill, but George took fire at once and pooh-poohed my prosaic suggestion of a dose of strychnine in the carcase of a goat, and eventually I weakly consented to go with him and face the beast in his lair.

Being in nominal charge of a half-company of His Majesty's forces, I thought we might legitimately take the Lewis gun squad with us, but George would have none of it, and eventually we landed at Sikuyu's village, armed to the teeth and looking quite formidable. The village gave us a royal reception as their deliverers from the oppressor, and I think George would have made a speech had he been alone. As it was we spent the afternoon superintending the erection of a flimsy platform in the fork of a big tree adjacent to the scene of Leo's latest kill, and beneath the tree we tethered a plump young goat as bait.

At dusk we clambered gingerly on to the platform, made ourselves as comfortable as we could, which is not saying much, and settled down for the vigil, lulled by the occasional plaintive bleating of the bait. We had agreed that it was to be George's shot, my part being merely to switch on an electric torch when the lion was busy eating, while George put a bullet through his brain or somewhere equally effective. It was very dark up in that tree, and surprisingly cold for Central Africa. Also it drizzled a bit and there were times when I fairly longed for the comparative comfort of our mess hut in camp. Every time either of us moved the whole platform creaked alarmingly and the knobby bits on the logs became excruciatingly painful.

Altogether I have spent few more uncomfortable evenings. Every time I dozed off I woke with a start and nearly rolled off our perch, and only a fine sense of discipline kept George from saying what he thought about me. Anyhow, I had managed to get to sleep, when about two a.m. George dug me violently in the ribs and I could feel the whole platform quivering with his suppressed excitement.

Outposts of Empire

There was certainly something about. In the gloom below I could just distinguish the white outline of the goat, which let out a sudden heart-rending bleat. Cautiously I felt for the button on the electric torch, sensing that George had his rifle to his shoulder.

Again the goat bleated, and at the same time there came the unmistakable grunt a lion gives when he is hunting. Something was moving, something large and black. The goat shrilled in terror, and, tingling in every nerve, I pressed the switch.

Nothing happened. The blamed thing had jammed.

George realised the position. There was not a moment to be lost, and, as I flung caution to the night air and wrestled desperately with that accursed torch, he took his chance in the dark and fired.

A scream of agony followed the roar of his rifle, and we distinctly heard the great brute tearing up the ground.

'Got him!' shouted George, and let off the rest of his magazine in rapid fire at the struggling black shape below.

I leaned forward, and as I moved the platform collapsed with a crash, flinging George and me, the rifles and the torch into a helpless heap on the very top of our writhing victim.

Something hairy and horrible struck me in the face and I smelt lion. One's brain works quickly at such moments, and almost as I touched the brute I was up again and shinning up that tree at the fastest rate I have ever displayed.

Quick as I was, George was quicker. I only realised that when my head hit his foot half-way up. Perched precariously side by side on an overhanging bough we listened to the lion's last moments, and then, as quiet descended, we remained perched. I for one was not going fumbling round any lion in the dark, and George concurred. So there we stuck, cramped and miserable, through the long hours to the dawn.

At daylight we found our kill. Both of them, in fact, for the goat was dead, shot through the head. And beside it lay the carcass of one of the village pigs that had strayed during the night, also accounted for by George's unerring aim. Around the bodies our gear and the remains of the platform were discovered in pleasing confusion, and as we scrambled stiffly down we met the village

Outposts of Empire

coming out to rejoice in its deliverance. It cost us a pound each to smooth things over.

Van Blerk brought in the lion's body four days afterwards, having shot it, twenty miles away, on the same night that we were waiting in the tree. After George had bought it, I took that photo of him with his foot on its head which now graces the Vicarage. I think we should have had one of the goat as well.

J. S. B.

A Spanish woman has had five children at a birth. We understand Dr. Marie Stopes is going on as well as can be expected. (6.3.29.)

DAILY DIFFICULTIES

Or, Can I Hinder You?

(*With acknowledgments to the 'Can I Help You?' column in 'The Sunday Dispatch'.*)

I have been walking-out with a girl for twenty-three years now, but I am not yet in a good enough position to be married. Is it fair to ask her to wait until I have saved up enough for the home?—
PERPLEXED.

Certainly, it isn't fair, PERPLEXED. If you are such a spineless creature, lacking intelligence enough to make your way in the world, why should you expect any girl to waste the best years of her life on you? Neither do I wish to waste my time answering silly questions.

Will you advise me as to what kind of shoes look the smartest? I find that the suède are apt to bulge and patent leather crack and soon look unsightly—WOULD-BE-SMART

It is evidently your feet and not the shoes that are to blame. No doubt they are large and unsightly, so there is really no hope for

Daily Difficulties

you. I am glad to say that I—and all my family—have small elegant feet. I can offer no solution to your big problem.

I am a kitchen-maid and do a lot of rough housework. How can I keep my nails from breaking and my hands from getting chapped?—**TWEENIE.**

Well, **TWEENIE**, I myself use an excellent hand-lotion at fifteen shillings a bottle. On receipt of a stamped addressed envelope I will forward an address where it can be purchased. As for your nails, I can give you an introduction to a wonderful manicurist in Knightsbridge. She is rather expensive, but has a large *clientèle* among the smartest Society women. My aunt (whose portrait appears on this page) always patronises her. Write to me again if I can assist you in any daily difficulty.

I am very shy and suffer agonies of bashfulness when I go out into company. Is there any remedy for this distressing condition?—**ANXIOUS.**

Certainly. If you are shy when you go out, why not stay at home?

I am going to be married and have saved up a hundred pounds for furnishing the home. Can you suggest the best way of laying out the money?—**WORKING LASS.**

I am delighted to give you my valuable advice. Genuine antiques are the rage for furnishing nowadays, and my own sister has a marvellous house furnished throughout with period furniture, with not a spurious piece in the place. This is expensive, of course, but if you make a tour of the lesser-known antique shops and have a flair for getting a bargain, you can often pick up wonderful pieces. I myself once secured some fine old Waterford glass for twenty pounds—less than half its value—in this way. Above all, in furnishing don't overcrowd your rooms or go in for bizarre effects. Let your house-linen be of the best, and *do* try the effect of pink *crêpe-de-chine* sheets. You will never want to sleep in any other kind afterwards. Write to me again, **WORKING LASS**, if in any doubt.

Daily Difficulties

I wrote to you some weeks ago asking what was the best stuff to use for cleaning my plate. I have to inform you that what you recommended has completely discoloured the teeth and I may have to get a new set.—INDIGNANT.

Of course I thought you referred to silver plate, INDIGNANT, and gave you a recipe accordingly. It is stupid ignorant people like you that make my task so troublesome. Please don't write to me again.—THE EDITRESS.

(The Editress of this page is always willing to give a helping hand and advice to readers in all daily difficulties.)

F. A. K.

A giant new dahlia has been named 'Daily Mail' owing to its great growth. It is now up to Lord Rothermere to re-name his paper *The Dahlia Mail*. (4.9.29.)

IF THIS SHOULD MEET THE EYE

(The following contribution and letter were both received during the same week. Mr. Punch has decided to concede to the request on this occasion but would emphasise his ruling that this sort of thing must not become a habit.)

'My poor boob,' said my host, 'it's as safe as houses. You simply take my car into Bordeaux, call at the *Vache Qui Chante* and ask the landlord, "Why does your stove smoke?" He will reply, "Because the leaves are green". Then you say, "Give me leaves which are browned by sun," and he will sell you a thousand perfectly good English cigarettes which have been smuggled. It's easy.'

'I know,' I replied. 'Then I pack the cigarettes in the car, get stopped by the police and explain that I didn't know there was a duty on tobacco. If I am still young enough I shall be released from prison in time to fight in the next war—you know, the one that will be started by the disarmament proposals. Thanks very much, Lamplowe. Nothing doing.'

If this should meet the Eye

'Now if only the pub had been called *Le Lapin aux Pieds Froids*,' said Lampowe, 'I suppose the scheme would have appealed to you?'

'Anyway,' I said, 'I've never driven your car. I might smash it up.'

He smiled at me incredulously.

'Do you mean to tell me that you have never driven a Quilecroit?' he demanded. 'Why, France is swarming with them. The makers turn them out by the million.'

Curiously enough I was over half-way to Bordeaux before it occurred to me to ask him why he should not fetch the cigarettes himself. Lampowe is like that. The man ought to have been a politician.

I arrived at the *Vache Qui Chante*, ordered some wine and spoke of the weather. Summoning up all my courage I ordered more wine and found I had forgotten the French for 'stove'. With a desperate effort I pulled myself together and ten minutes later was on my way home with the contraband. As the road slipped under the wheels I began to feel happier. Lampowe had been right—the thing was easy. He had also been right about the popularity of the Quilecroit car, for I had already met six of the breed when I suddenly came across the seventh, drawn up at the edge of the road with one back tyre ominously flat. I was about to pass by with that look of silent sympathy so popular with the motoring classes when I noticed that the driver was a woman and that the car itself bore a G.B. plate. Obedient to the dictates of chivalry and compatriotism I swore softly and applied my brakes.

'Can I help?'

Her hair glinted in the sunlight as she looked up.

'I can't get the jack to work.'

As I started operations—'Shall I stand by and hold things,' she asked, 'or go away and put my fingers in my ears?'

'There's a copy of *Punch* in my car,' I replied; 'would you like to look at it while I change the wheel?'

'Thanks—I've seen *Punch*—I have it sent out every week, but——'

If this should meet the Eye

(*'What is this—propitiation?'—ED. 'No; it's part of the story. Besides, it shows the sort of girl she was.'*)

'I suppose you haven't got an English cigarette, have you? I ran dry a week ago.'

My case was empty. I gazed at her earnestly and decided that she looked quite unlike a detective—a thing a real detective would scorn to do.

'Under the rugs in the back seat,' I said; 'take a box if you like.'

'Well, you seem to have got a fairly good stock, so if you're sure you don't mind. How much do I owe you?'

'Thirty francs,' I replied unguardedly.

'Thir—ooh! If you're caught you'll probably be guillotined,' she gasped.

'I never am caught,' I said coldly.

I finished the work in hand and stood for a moment looking at the two cars. To the last lick of paint they were identical. As the girl thanked me once more I glanced at my watch.

'I must hurry,' I said, 'my host gets peevish if one is late for *déjeuner*.'

As I let in the clutch—'Many thanks,' she said. 'Good luck with the cargo.'

I gave the car her head, flashed through an empty village street and kept on. As I approached the next village I saw a gendarme standing in the road with outstretched arms. I stopped the car. So far as I could feel, my heart had already stopped.

'A beautiful day,' I said to the gendarme—'a day worthy of France.' He was not interested. One had reported by telephone that my car had passed through the village of Cloisy at a pace ferocious. One could not allow so formidable a speed. I must accompany him to the gendarmerie, where one would take my particulars. The telephone, he said, had been indistinct, and he had been sent out post-haste to stop a brown Quilecroit *coupé* bearing a G.B. plate. By this time the officer in charge would have ascertained the number from the gendarme at Cloisy and identification would be complete.

Moodily I nodded my acquiescence. I could not remember whether or no they still guillotined people in public.

If this should meet the Eye

The gendarmerie smelt of French cigarettes and whitewash. The officer in charge shook his head at me and reproved me loquaciously, knocking off the ash from his cigarette against a notice which forbade smoking. When his admonition had run out—'Monsieur admits the charge?' he asked.

'Not at all. Regard, my Captain, my poor little car, so tranquil, so——'

'Attend, Monsieur. Your car is a *coupé*, brown and a Quilecroit?'

'But, yes.'

'Number, G.B. K.O.27653? That is the number reported at Cloisy.'

Here I hesitated, for I did not know the number of Lamplowe's car.

'The car is outside,' I said; 'it is for you to ascertain the number.'

The officer's head jerked sideways and one of the satellites went out to inspect. Even as he passed the door I inwardly cursed my imprudence. What if the fellow lifted the rugs in the back seat?

In twenty seconds, however, he returned. 'Number G.B. S.B.31190,' he announced. There was a glutinous silence. I broke it with a hammer.

'I shall report this outrage to the Embassy,' I said.

The officer was desolated—it was a mistake. He hoped Monsieur would cause no trouble. One had reported from Cloisy—Monsieur would be merciful.

My heart, warmed by my sudden reprieve, gushed forth mercy.

Over *déjeuner* I told Lamplowe my adventure.

'But how did you work it?' he asked.

'I didn't work anything. The police had simply got hold of the wrong car.'

'But, my poor fish,' he replied, 'K.O. 27653 is my number.'

For a moment I said nothing. Then I got up and walked to the car. The spare wheel was punctured.

'I don't know whose car you've brought home,' said Lamplowe, 'or where you've left mine, but somebody has got you out of a nasty mess. Another case, I suppose, of the Devil looking after his own.'

If this should meet the Eye

'I think it was an angel,' I said.

And now Lamplowe wants his own car, because, he says, the back seat is better equipped than that of the car which I brought home.

Will the Angel please send her address to the Editor?

IF THIS SHOULD MEET THE EYE

Dear Mr. Punch.—I wonder if you would help one of your countrywomen in distress. A few days ago I picked up a puncture on the Bordeaux road and on starting to change the wheel found that my jack refused to function. So I sat on the roadside in the dejected fashion of a maiden in distress. In turn I refused help from two Spaniards, an Italian and a Frenchman, all of whom had dark flashing eyes. Seeing that I was not to be trifled with, Fate then dealt me a young Englishman with baggy flannel trousers. While he was changing the wheel for me we discussed *Punch*, tobacco and the extreme similarity of his car and my own—all vital subjects, as events proved. He set off in front of me at full speed, and as he passed the village of Cloisy he was two hundred yards ahead. I rounded a bend just in time to see a gendarme spring from nowhere and take his number as he flashed by.

I knew, of course, what would happen—the gendarme would telephone through to the next village and there my friend would be stopped. I happened to know that, for reasons not unconnected with tobacco, he would hate to have his car searched, so I made a *détour* to avoid the Cloisy gendarme and arrived at the next village, to find my compatriot's car outside the gendarmerie. I examined it and found that the rugs covering the cigarettes on the back seat had not yet been disturbed.

My one idea was to remove the contraband; but to transfer this from his car to my own would take too long. Making sure that nobody was about, I ran my car behind his, got out and drove his away. When I had gone a safe distance I stopped and waited for him. Probably he took another road, for, though I waited an hour, I neither saw nor heard anything of him.

Now here I am with his car and there he is with mine, neither

If this should meet the Eye

knowing the other's name or address. This is where you come in. You see, he reads *Punch*, so would you be so good as to publish this letter? You don't mind, do you? Please, Mr. Punch.

Yours very sincerely,
PAMELA E. METHERRILL,
Clos de Renard, Blongy-le-Bas
A. C.

A musical composition descriptive of a day in the life of an American motor-car has been performed in London. *L'Après-midi d'un Ford?* (11.9.29.)

THE WASP

*Of those uncertain creatures
Who take a simple joy
In swelling up one's features
On purpose to annoy,
Things void of natural sweetness,
Aggressive and inhosp.
(Pardon the incompleteness),
You are the first, O wasp.*

*There is no place we visit
In England's pleasant land
(It isn't your place, is it?)
But you must take a hand;
You set the nerves a-jangle,
You turn the tan to chalk,
Of anglers when they angle,
Of walkers when they walk.*

*In no uncertain manner
You bid the bather flee;
You foil the caravanner*

The Wasp

*Who merely wants his tea;
You raid the earnest hopper,
You break upon our sports,
And are, I'm told, improper
To river girls in shorts.*

*We slap at you and swat you;
We fell you as we may
(The rapture when we've got you
Is more than words can say);
One may see great deeds daily
When men unused to strife
Brave you, albeit palely,
For screaming child or wife.*

*And we have learnt to fashion
A lure that cannot fail,
Born of a lasting passion
That you confess for ale;
An artful jar that cozens
You in and, when you're tight,
Drowns you in drink by dozens,
A most immoral sight.*

*But when the day is sinking
And you retire to rest
That, to my private thinking,
Is where man comes out best;
Armed with his apparatus
He tracks you to the comb
Whence you come forth to bait us;
Then, when the last wasp's home,*

*Bring forth, O man, your funnel;
With oil and poison come;
Take heed lest haply one'll*

The Wasp

*Pass down a warning hum;
Insert with care the former;
Pour down the latter thick;
That should have made things warmer:
That will have done the trick.*

*Thus with discreet defiance
We tackle you, and yet,
For all the arts of science,
You don't seem much upset;
Alert and undiminished
You still appear to prosp.;
I leave the word unfinished
To rhyme with you, O wasp.*
MAJOR K. (*Dum-Dum*).

Preparations are being hurried forward by the Maoris of New Zealand to welcome the British Rugby team next year. We understand that New Zealand Frothblowers will sing, 'The Maori Are Together'. (11.9.29.)

As a Belgian who is assistant to the French camera-man said to the American who is assistant to the German director, 'If only our Austrian leading lady can react to the passion of the Italian male star, this Russian story ought to make another good English film.' (11.9.29.)

THOSE PERFECT CHILDREN

I am convinced that the demoralising influence of so much modern fiction is very largely due to the almost total disappearance of that edifying and at one time deservedly popular character, the perfect child.

Those Perfect Children

The children one occasionally comes across in the pages of present-day novels are not merely far from morally perfect, they are for the most part riotously robust. This in itself is sufficient indication that our literature is not the ennobling thing it was.

Not so terribly long ago it was accounted almost a crime in authorship to create a healthy child. The demand for diseased or crippled children was stern and relentless, and the reading public of that day was not to be put off with such insignificant maladies as measles, whooping-cough or scarlet fever, unless of course satisfactorily serious complications could be relied upon to ensue.

Had *Paul Dombey*, 'Jo,' *Little Nell*, and *Tiny Tim* failed to perish in their early youth it is doubtful whether an exasperated public would have permitted Dickens to earn more than a bare living. As it was he took a grave risk with *David Copperfield*, and even there his conscience compelled him to inflict upon *David* a harassed and unhappy maturity as a just punishment for not having died respectably as an infant.

I well remember in my early youth finding it practically impossible within the restricted range of fiction permitted me to get away from the little invalid girl. This moral phenomenon was either a cripple or else completely bedridden as the result of some malignant disease, and she would lie around throughout the story discoursing chiefly of angels (concerning whom authors in those days held the most definite and satisfying views) and making older people wish they had led better lives. Her doctor was a good old man, though his professional services appeared to be limited to shaking his head sadly and turning away to wipe away a tear. Still, he had an extensive practice and appeared to prosper.

There was also a small boy who was knocked about a good deal by his father. He had the advantage over the little invalid girl in that his author permitted him to be turned out into the street where he saw a bit of life and had some mild adventures before getting run over and dying in hospital.

Frolicking in calm youthful gravity throughout the pages of such inspiring works as *Walks Abroad* and *Evenings at Home* were a brother and sister named, I believe, *Edward* and *Louisa*. These the

Those Perfect Children

author, somewhat daring, allowed to be sound in body, but he afflicted them mentally so that they were obsessed by a craving for information of an educational and elevating character.

They were children to make a father's heart glow, and they did not call him 'Old Bean' either. They were careful to question 'Dear Papa' only on such subjects as he had been carefully swotting up beforehand so that he could reply fluently and at great length, and they did not interrupt him save to interpolate an encouraging subquery or an ejaculation of delighted wonder.

They were perfect children if you like, the sort of children you could take out for the day and keep your money in your pocket all the time, since the social habits of the wood-louse were of more interest to them than ices or chocolate éclairs.

Often have I wondered whether *Edward* and *Louisa* ever grew up. Their future beyond the period of *Walks Abroad* and *Evenings at Home* appears to be unrecorded. I could not conceive their ever contracting a malignant disease; they were, I am sure, much too cautious and observant ever to get run over. Perhaps their brains burst. I hope so.

D. C.

The drama still seems an unconscionable long time dying, in spite of those who are an unconscionable long time dining. (13.11.29)

PERSIA

Most people know Persia as the place where the rugs come from. But they don't, usually. And the Persian refugee who tries to sell Persian rugs which are not Persian rugs is a refugee all right, but not from Persia. He is merely refugeeing from the last person to whom he sold a Persian rug which wasn't a Persian rug.

If you meet a stranger walking on the road in Persia you say, 'Don't be tired.' It doesn't go quite so well in England. And if you apologise to a Persian for turning your back on him he just

Persia

says, 'But a rose has no back'. I've never tried that one in England. And if—it isn't very likely, but if—you do see a man working in Persia, you say, 'God give you strength to work'. I tried that one in the Strand quite recently, but the pneumatic drill was making rather a loud noise, so I got away all right.

When I first got to Persia I climbed with some difficulty to the top of a pass. There I was met by a distinguished-looking, but rather dirty patriarch who, handing me a singularly unripe orange, said, 'From your coming the desert blossoms with roses'. He was also kind enough to tell his servant to look after my baggage mule. We had tea together (my tea) and I stored up a host of compliments for the subsequent confusion of unappreciative friends. He allowed me to give him the equivalent of five shillings, and I was permitted to keep the unripe orange; and I went my way feeling that my many virtues had at last found recognition.

It was when I unpacked at the next stage that I found out that his was the 'desert' and most of my kit was the 'roses'.

I was walking along a path in Persia once and a man shot me from the top of a hill in the leg. I pressed for an explanation. He said, 'I'm most awfully sorry, but you've no idea what a magnificent target you were from the top of the hill. I've only had this rifle a couple of days and I wanted to try it.' I told him it seemed to be all right, and I stayed with him a week until I was better. He charged me nothing at all.

W. M.

According to a weekly paper the police always stop the traffic to let Mr. Bernard Shaw cross the road. The idea of stopping Mr. Bernard Shaw to let the traffic pass is said to have been abandoned years ago. (22.1.30.)

'NOUNS OF ASSEMBLAGE'

Every now and then somebody begins reviving in the correspondence columns those old and picturesque 'nouns of assemblage'—a

'Nouns of Assemblage'

'gaggle' of geese, a 'siege' of herons, a 'murmuration' of starlings, a 'skulk' of foxes, a 'pride' of lions, and all the rest of them. But instead of delving into the remote past it seems a pity that there is not more of an effort to equip our contemporary fauna with collective terms of that kind—a 'pomp' of Pekingese, a 'hazard' of greyhounds, or a 'psittacosis' of parrots, for example.

Nor is there any reason why these labels should be restricted to birds and beasts. It would be both picturesque and effective to be able to say, 'Yes, I tried to take a short stroll, but turned back because I found myself mixed up with a stink of motors'; or, 'Believe me, there isn't an inch of room in the club-house—I've never seen such a gargle of golfers in all my life!'

In the hope of assisting any movement for the promotion of Brighter English the following suggestions are offered:

An 'argument' of bridge fiends.

A 'boodle' of company promoters.

A 'fleece' of punters.

A 'shake' or 'scatter' of cocktails.

A 'sizzle' of sausages.

A 'thrust' of gate-crashers.

A 'bombination' of Bright Young People.

The component parts of the last-named assemblage ought to be particularly interested in the present suggestion. These would gain greatly by being able to announce, 'I thought of drifting round to Lady Smythe's to hear a new gush of poets, but when it came to the pinch I funk'd facing up to such an altitude of highbrows. So I cut away round to the new show at the Coladium, where I saw a jolly good guffaw of clowns, supported by a most excellent frolic of flappers'.

G. P.

OUR CONQUERORS

The Pekinese

Disdain to please

By any set design,

Our Conquerors

*But make a thrall
Of one and all
By simple Right Divine.*

*The Pekinese
Our houses seize
And bend them to their mind,
For every one
's Napoleon
And Wellington combined.*

*The Pekinese
Demosthenes
Requires no voice to plead;
Those shining eyes,
So soft, so wise,
Get everything they need.*

*The Pekinese
Adore their ease
And slumber like the dead;
In comfort curled
They view the world
As one unending bed.*

*The Pekinese
Abstain from fleas
And doggy things like that,
But hate it when
Unthinking men
Compare them to the cat.*

*The Pekinese
On China's seas
Embarked to win the West;
A piece of Ming
's a lovely thing,
But oh! the dogs are best!*

E. V. L.

A Red Indian Wedding

The latest news from the Chinese civil war front is that one of the Generals is negotiating for the transfer of a couple of the Arsenal's forwards. (23.4.30.)

A RED INDIAN WEDDING

In our 'civilised' Red Indian village we get married, as far as we can, on the approved procedure of St. Margaret's, Westminster. First of all I get a visit from the prospective bridegroom. Such a one came to see me last Friday. After discussing the weather, the hunting, the fishing and the trapping with a mind obviously focussed on something else, he finally confessed that he needed a loan of eleven dollars for the purpose of committing matrimony (I had called the banns a few weeks previously). I asked him when the happy day was to be. He did not know, but thought 'probably on Monday'.

On the Sunday I asked the chief, who was uncle to the lady in the case, when it was to be. He did not know either, but suspected 'the day after to-morrow'. The bride's papa confirmed this and added, 'about ten o'clock'. I instructed him to send a dog-team for me when he was ready.

Eleven o'clock on the fateful day, and still no sign of my charioteer.

11.20.—Arrived a heavy home-made sled (absurdly called a 'jumper') and four depressed-looking and moth-eaten curs, all in the charge of a very small youth. My wife and I climbed aboard, the moths' delight broke into a leisurely trot and the youth ran behind. Half an hour later we reached the teacher's residence, where the bride and attendant damsels were to array themselves in glorious attire. But there was no sign of the bride, and the two bridesmaids who had come had been despatched to make a fire in the church stove.

Noon arrived, but still no bride.

12.25.—Enter the bridegroom, all feet and hands and vacuous grin, attended by three best men. Consternation. We had only prepared a buttonhole for one. Frantic business of making two bunches of paper roses and sprinkling them with lavender water.

A Red Indian Wedding

12.35.—Enter serenely the bride, wearing an Oh-have-I-kept-you-waiting expression.

12.40.—Enter the third bridesmaid. Mysterious ritual in bedroom.

1.0.—Bride and attendant fair proclaimed 'almost ready'. Rashly I choose one of the three best men and carry him off to the church with the groom. Here we find the congregation patiently waiting—the wise ones since noon, the wildly optimistic since ten o'clock, the advertised time of the wedding.

1.5.—The bridegroom and best man being deposited in the front pew, I don my robes and look out of the window for the bridal train.

1.10.—I continue to gaze. Bridegroom assumes a brick-red tint, sadly disagreeing with the post-office red of his cravat.

1.15.—I gaze some more. Bridegroom takes on beetroot hue, easing the colour-scheme a trifle.

1.20.—Visions of bridal train among the distant trees. I send the sexton to toll the bell, this being the local custom on the appearance of bridal processions and funeral cortèges.

1.30.—Fair maidens quite near the church. Where is the bride's father? Nobody knows. Sudden panic seizes one of the sidesmen, who departs at a run, demanding *fortissimo*, 'Elijah!' Elijah descends from heaven by the back stairs of a neighbouring house and comes at a gallop. I seize him for his usual office of organist and ask what hymn he will play. He inclines to

*'Brief life is here our portion
Brief sorrow, short-lived care.'*

Does the minister not like it? Strange! We finally choose, 'O God, our help in ages past,' the Indian hymnal not being well furnished with festive psalms.

1.40.—I marshal the groom and best best man to the chancel steps. Best best-man takes up his position on groom's left. No? Tries behind. No? Tries in front. No? Finally comes to rest on N.E. corner in echelon formation. I return to the window and look out. Bride has completely vanished with all her train, but by this time the bridegroom is past taking in the significance of the news.

A Red Indian Wedding

1.45.—Reappearance of the bridal train from a house near by. Organist strikes up. Enter the bride at last on the arm of a bridesmaid. Papa remains glued to the organ-stool.

Service passes off fairly well, groom remaining in dazed condition throughout. He gives me the ring too soon; I hand it to the best man, who promptly, but with natural bashfulness, tries to bestow it on the bride. I frustrate this design and hold it myself until it is needed. Bride begins to weep copiously, to the grave detriment of her paper bouquet.

Finally I lead the way to the vestry. Groom stumbles after me, still in a partial state of coma. Bride follows on; bridesmaids bring up the rear. Best best man resumes his seat, groping for his goshes.

After the signing of the register we are all photographed twelve times on the church steps, to the accompaniment of a salute of seven shot-guns immediately behind the bride's ear. By way of illustrating the old theory that firing brings corpses to the surface, the groom suddenly comes to himself and races off alone to the wedding feast. The ceremony is over.

R. B. H.

'See Your Own Country First!' says a poster. You will find it behind the petrol pumps. (21.5.30.)

MAXIMUM AND MINIMUM

I have been making notes of the conversational tropes of a young female friend who would never be able to look the world in the face again if she so far lost her nerve as to spoil the ship for a ha'porth of tar. Give her the brush and the bucket and she would cover it from rudder to bowsprit, from topmast to keel. Similarly, let her loose on the lily with a pail of white paint and you would not know the flower. But I believe none the less that if she were accused of exaggeration she would be astounded and her pretty eyes would dilate with a shocked dismay.

Maximum and Minimum

I subjoin a few examples of her gift in the aggrandising art, with my own idea of their true prosaic equivalents:

Reasons for being late for lunch or dinner.

I walked miles looking for a taxi—The first three were engaged.
There was a block which lasted for weeks—Three minutes.

I forgot the number and tried every house in the street—Went to one wrong address first.

Reasons for not ringing-up

I tried for hours without getting any reply—Either one minute's delay or never tried.

They gave me the wrong number at least forty times—Either one wrong number or never tried.

Impressions of Foreign Travel

My trunks were absolutely packed with dutiable things, but the darling Customs man never made me open one—One hundred cigarettes.

We never went to bed all the time we were in Paris—Two late nights on Montmartre.

The sun was like an oven—Balmy weather.

The cars absolutely touched one another for miles—A fine Sunday outside Paris.

Sidelights on a wet and windy day

I hadn't a dry stitch on me—Here and there spotted by rain.

My shoes were absolutely full of water—Damp soles.

I knew it was going to be wet—the glass went back miles—Slight tendency to 'unsettled'.

The wind was so strong I was blown clean off my feet—Gusty corner.

Reasons for arriving late at the theatre. These are the same as for luncheon and dinner, with one or two additions, such as:

I was here to the tick but I had to fight my way through a seeth-

Maximum and Minimum

ing mob—Five stallholders were taking off their coats in the passage.

The people in the cab in front of me had a row with the driver which went on for half an hour—Two minutes.

Incidents in a motor-ride

We couldn't have been going a yard less than two hundred miles an hour—Sixty miles per hour, perhaps.

In some parts the road was stiff with policemen, so of course we were careful—The same force as usual.

The joke is that when we were stopped and they took Freddy's name and address we were crawling like ten thousand snails—Fifty m.p.h., probably.

General information about health and habits

I never touch breakfast—Rolls and coffee.

I never had a wink of sleep all night—Woke at seven instead of eight.

I lay awake for hours—Ten conscious minutes.

I make a point of walking five miles every morning—Half a mile.

Effect of a farce

I died of laughter—Was spasmodically amused and is still with us.

E. V. L.

MORE STAGE NEWS

'Othello,' a 'Debonair' young fellow, accompanied by 'Magda', a 'Dishonoured Lady,' staggered 'Down Our Street' in 'The Middle Watch' singing 'A Song of Sixpence', which so disturbed the tenant of 'Liberty Hall' that he shouted "Götterdämmerung" your eyes, I won't have "A Night Like This".

'The Three Musketeers' appeared 'On the Spot' and flung the disturbers of the peace into 'The Apple Cart' and took them to 'The House that Jack Built', where 'The Man in Possession' and 'The First Mrs. Frazer' heaped 'Insult' on them and kept them in 'Suspense' from 'Nine till Six'.

F. G. C.

‘Non-Legal Advice’

A set of teeth and a pair of boots were unearthed on a Rugby field in the North. It is supposed that the rest of the referee must have escaped. (4.6.30.)

‘NON-LEGAL ADVICE’

It is only since I received my lawyer’s account that I have begun to realise what a philanthropic lunatic I have been; for here is a man whose livelihood consists of attending to the affairs of others, whilst I, poor fool, have been doing the very same thing all these years for nothing.

To think that I have allowed my friends to drink at the fountain of my knowledge, to help themselves from my vast store of entertainment and to obtrude their paltry affairs upon my notice without ever paying me a penny for the privilege!

But ‘Nothing for Nothing’ will be my motto for the future, and my friends must understand that, if they wish to avail themselves of my advice or my company, they must pay me just as they would have to pay their lawyers. If George wants me to inspect his gladioli or meet his provincial aunt or play bridge with his wife, I shall be only too pleased to let him have my quotation for any of these services. And in order that those with whom I associate may have fair warning of the sort of thing that is coming to them here is an extract from my friend Pobblethwaite’s account, in the preparation of which I have used the best legal method:

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNT.

	£	s.	d.
<i>July 4th</i>			
To casual meeting outside G.P.O. Saying, ‘Hullo, Pobblethwaite, how are you?’	0	2	0
Attending your remarks <i>re</i> weather, considering same and advising that present conditions are likely to be maintained	0	6	8
Attending your remarks <i>re</i> trade depression, commiserating and commenting thereon	0	6	8
Saying, ‘Well, cheerio, Pobblethwaite’	0	2	0
10% on fees in respect of above owing to inclement weather conditions	0	1	9

‘Non-Legal Advice’

Whisky and soda owing to suspected incipient chill due to	£	s.	d.
above	0	1	6
<i>July 5th</i>			
To letter asking for return of borrowed book	0	5	0
Stamp	0	0	1½
Attending telephone call in which you alleged that you			
never borrowed borrowed book	0	2	6
To borrowed book.. .. .	0	7	6
<i>July 10th</i>			
To visiting personally, at your request.. .. .	1	1	0
Examining male offspring, aged two years, perusing con-			
sidering and commenting thereon	0	3	4
Holding same	0	3	4
Advising as to best Schools and Colleges for same	0	6	8
Teatime consultation, conversing amiably	0	3	4
Complimenting your wife on cakes	0	3	4
Saying good-bye	0	2	0
Petrol	0	0	9
To Fees as above	3	9	7
To Disbursements as above	0	9	10½
	<hr/>		
	£3	19	5½
Less CREDIT by tea and cake 10th July	0	0	9
	<hr/>		
TOTAL ..	£3	18	8½
	<hr/>		

REMITTANCE WILL OBLIGE

L. G. L.

We gather from the fashion reports that women are wearing their legs shorter. (25.6.30.)

OUR LOCUST CAMPAIGN

When the locusts first arrived in our particular desert it seemed too easy or, as Herbert cryptically put it, ‘money for jam’. The motto for Government officials dealing with locusts is precisely the same as for Bolsheviks dealing with capitalists, i.e. exterminate them; and with their arrival Headquarters issued a little handbook, a sort of Locusts’ Guide or Combined Training. It gave the insect’s name in

Our Locust Campaign

seven known and three unknown languages—one of which could be played on the ukelele but not pronounced—and described his childhood, training, matrimonial affairs and early demise.

Apparently the Regimental Sergeant-Major in the locust world preponderated to an extraordinary extent, for the standard of discipline maintained by swarms was extremely high. According to the book they always moved in well-ordered masses, dressed by the right, and halted in assembly formation sharp at Retreat. One conceived a profound regard for the insect, and it was with a shock that we discovered that the last chapter dealt in a most ruthless manner with his complete extermination. This, as I have said before, seemed too easy, as the locust, like the fanatical Mullah, apparently welcomed death and even encouraged self-immolation.

In his blushing adolescence or red stage he, according to instructions issued, conveniently formed up in close masses and could be treated with flame-guns. The text-book seemed extremely optimistic on this point, but if there should be a shortage of flame-guns or any other unforeseen difficulty arose it was apparently the correct thing to arrange for them to be gathered by hand at so much a sack. For the benefit of those officials who had been slack enough to allow a few pairs of breeding locusts to escape and lay eggs there were instructions showing the correct procedure, which also was delightfully simple, as the inhabitants could earn good money at collecting the eggs at five piastres an oke or ploughing them up. As for any eggs that survived and developed into nymphs and hoppers, it was as easy as rolling off a log to obliterate these 'day-old chicks' by driving them into trenches and poisoning them with prepared bran, which was infallible.

Somehow or other things did not go quite according to the book of words. The first swarm Herbert struck was ten miles wide, which shook his morale, and while he was measuring its length, which the book laid down as an essential part of the plan of campaign, it took fright and, though Herbert chased it for forty miles in a car firing on three cylinders, he never really got on terms with it again. Reading a day later about a swarm that had materialised in South Russia, Herbert decided it must be his, as, judging by the rate they were

Our Locust Campaign

going, they might easily have reached Siberia; and so we wrote them off as 'destroyed'; for, as Herbert said, if not actually destroyed they had certainly been morally defeated. After this, swarms arrived from all parts of the compass and, as it was extremely difficult to measure them owing to the fact that their flanks appeared to fuse into each other, we started on them with flame-guns without going into this formality. The flame-gun is a lethal weapon used by the Germans for spraying trenches filled with British troops, and it is very effective. It should, however, be operated by people of marked intelligence, and it is bad form for anyone holding the gun to turn half-right or half-left when addressed, say 'Na'am?' ('Eh?') and put the nozzle into the next man's stomach. The first casualties started to trickle into hospital twelve hours after the flame-guns began operating, but the local doctor nobly rose to the occasion by opening a special 'burn' ward in a marquee in which after a week there was standing room only.

In a few weeks' time our Arabs began to arrive with sacks of eggs, most of which, like the fruit-growers' baskets, had the pick of the bunch on top, the remainder of the sack being desert sand; for the Arab is ever an opportunist. But the egg season had barely started when Herbert reported that the first hoppers from his area had destroyed his early beans and crowded into his bed.

In response to an urgent telephone message asking if he was dealing with them, Herbert replied that they were dealing with him, and that he had been forced back ten miles, but that if he had fifty more flame-guns he thought he might regain his old trenches by means of a counter-attack.

Now was the moment to use the poisoned bran, and a hundred sacks of the potent stuff were despatched to Herbert, with instructions to spread it in the path of the locusts. The effect, the book said, would be instantaneous. Herbert savagely reported that the book was right and that he was sending his wife a sack to feed their baby on instead of Bloxo, as the locusts were thriving and getting fat on it. He suggested that swarms could easily be annihilated by its means as they would follow a man with a sack of it anywhere, and he was sending out people to wade in the sea with it.

Our Locust Campaign

The following day, however, he telephoned that the bran had proved its efficacy, as it had poisoned two camels and thirteen goats, and that nine men who had drunk out of a tin used to mix it were vomiting hard, but that he hoped to save them with salt and water.

As Herbert said, if only he could keep the locusts from emetics (and they were quite capable of using them) he had great hopes of the bran.

To lighten, or increase, our difficulties the Army was mobilised and despatched to our assistance, and Herbert was kept busily engaged in settling disputes concerning officers' seniority and precedence with one hand while he slew locusts with the other.

The last news I have had of him is that he has gone home in a P. & O. as a cot case, and the medical certificate states that he is expected to recover his reason if humoured and treated with sympathy.

C. S. J.

More than one dictator is said to be combating obesity. A whiff of grape-fruit seems indicated. (30.7.30.)

MISLEADING CASES

WEAR AND TEAR

Haddock and Others v. Commissioners for Income Tax

This was an appeal from the decision of the Income-Tax Commissioners upon a case stated for the opinion of the High Court.

Mr. Justice Radish said: 'The appellant in this case is a Mr. Albert Haddock, a pertinacious litigant whom we are always glad to see, and let me add that it gives me pleasure to see the Commissioners, so often and for such poor cause the initiators of legislation, for once upon their defence.

'Mr. Haddock asked for a declaration that he is, and has been for some years, entitled to certain allowances or deductions for income-tax purposes under the heading of (a) Expenses and (b) Wear and Tear of Machinery and Plant; and on the assumption that he is right

Misleading Cases

he claims that a considerable sum is owing to him in respect of past years in which the Commissioners have refused to grant him such allowances.

'Mr. Haddock appears on behalf of the whole body of authors, artists and composers, and the position of a large number of creative brain-workers will be affected by our decision.

'Now the theory of Income-Tax (under Schedule D) is that it is a tax upon the *profits* of occupations, professions or businesses. The manufacturer of soap, who makes and sells soap to the value of £10,000, at a cost to himself of £8,000, is taxed upon £2,000. And if there is no profit there is (in theory) no tax. He is not taxed upon what comes into the till, but upon what goes into the savings-bank. Further, it is recognised by the State that his soap-manufacturing machinery and plant must in the nature of things suffer wear and tear with the passage of time, and on account of that depreciation he is allowed to deduct certain sums from his income, apart from the day-to-day expenses of his business.

'Now the position of the author, artist or composer is very different. But it is Mr. Haddock's first complaint that the Commissioners treat him as if he were in the same position as the soap-manufacturer, except where it would benefit him to be treated so. In the vulgar phrase, he says, they have it both ways. The author is taxed, practically speaking, not on profits but on receipts, on almost everything that comes into the till. For the small deductions allowed to him on account of professional expenses are meagre and in no way comparable to the expenses side of the soap-manufacturer's profit-and-loss accounts.

'An author, says Mr. Haddock, cannot write about nothing (though one or two come very near to it). The whole of life is his raw material, and, like other raw material, it has to be paid for. His friendships, love affairs, marriages, journeys, sports, reading, recreation and social relations cannot be had for nothing. And Mr. Haddock argues very plausibly that his expenditure on these items, without which he would be unable to carry on his profession at all, should be entered on the 'loss' side of his profit-and-loss account. The Commissioners, however, have obstinately refused to allow

Misleading Cases

him anything by way of expenses, except for such obvious and trivial items as stationery, typewriting, use of secretary, pens, pencils, indiarubber and so forth; they have allowed him nothing for hospitality, entertainment or travel, and they have invariably deleted from his list of professional expenses such items as champagne, Monte Carlo, night-club subscriptions, 'first nights', Deauville, and hire of yacht at Cowes. "But how", says Mr. Haddock, "can a man write about Monte Carlo or Cowes unless he goes to Monte Carlo or Cowes? How is he to study and depict the gilded life of Society without constant visits to certain Grill Rooms, to Covent Garden, to the Riviera, and other places where Society is to be found?" These questions seem to me to be unanswerable; and they received no satisfactory answer from the representative of the defendants in the box. Further, it is not denied that if a soap-manufacturer were compelled for business reasons to visit Cowes or Monte Carlo he would be permitted to deduct the necessary expenses of the expedition when calculating his taxable income. I see no reason why Mr. Haddock should not do the same.

'Next, as to wear and tear. One of the constant disadvantages of the author's trade is that he is a one-man business, at once his own employer, designer, technician, machine-minder and machine. Once the soap-manufacturer has equipped and organised his factory he may relax; a week's holiday, a month's illness will not suspend the output of his soap or the growth of his income. But, when the author stops, the machine stops, and the output stops. He is unable, on holiday, in sickness or in age, to depute his functions to another person. Here is one more reason why £100 earned by the author should not be treated and taxed on the same terms as £100 accruing as profit to the soap-manufacturer. "Yet", says Mr. Haddock, "this is done; so let it be done thoroughly and logically. The author's machinery and plant are his brain and his physique, his fund of inventiveness, his creative powers. These are not inexhaustible; they are seldom rested (for the reasons given above); the strain upon them increases as the years go by, and in some cases, I understand, is aggravated by late hours and dissipation. And if it is proper for the soap-manufacturer to be relieved in respect of the wear and tear of his machinery and

Misleading Cases

the renewal thereof (which money can easily buy), how much more consideration is owing to the delicate and irreplaceable mechanism of the writer?"

'Under this head Mr. Haddock has repeatedly appealed for relief in respect of sums expended on doctor's accounts, on sunlight treatment, on nourishing foods and champagne, and upon necessary holidays at Monte Carlo and Cowes. The Commissioners have refused, and I find that they were wrong.

'Under both heads, therefore, Mr. Haddock's appeal succeeds. He estimates that if his expenses be properly calculated on the basis already explained he has never yet made a taxable profit; for at the end of every year of his literary operations he has been a little more in debt than the year before. In every year, therefore, he has been wrongly assessed and unlawfully taxed; and I order the Commissioners to reopen the accounts for the past seven years and repay to Mr. Haddock the very large sums owing to him.

'I may add a few words for the general guidance of the Inland Revenue Officials in this class of case. There seems to be an idea abroad (especially in Parliament, where every erroneous idea is carefully incubated) that the author deserves less generous treatment than the soap-manufacturer, on the ground that the latter is an employer of labour. Mr. Haddock, in his evidence, some of which I read with reluctance, has ably exposed the fallacy herein contained, though his observations on the Derating Act were perhaps tinged with irrelevancy. "It is difficult", he said, "to discuss this notion with patience. What a poop Parliament is, milord! The authors, writers, and composers are in a sense the biggest employers in the country, for they are the only original creators of employment. Their books, their articles, their music must be typed and printed and bound and distributed, performed upon the stage, the wireless, the gramophone and the screen. The publishers, printers, composers, bookbinders, booksellers, the actors, singers, musicians, and stage-hands, nay, the very newspaper proprietors and their enormous staffs, owe their employment, their earnings and their profits to the creative mind and technical skill of the writer, since without him their occupation would be nothing and their machines be silent.

Misleading Cases

He is the producer and they an army of middlemen; he is the true creator of wealth, and they, if I may employ the genial language of a certain political party, are but parasites upon his brain and labour. Yet Parliament, in its recent Derating Act, designed to encourage and increase employment, extends the privileges of that Act to the printer and not to the author who finds employment for that printer, 'derates' the 'factory' section of a newspaper office, but not the editorial side, without which that factory would be valueless and idle. My Lord, how characteristically crass of Parliament! How utterly soggy! How——" But perhaps Mr. Haddock's point is now clear enough. The question whether the premises of authors ought to be classed as "factories" under the Derating Act must be decided by some other tribunal than this. But the principles and values laid down by Mr. Haddock for the proper estimation of authors and writers are sound, and should govern the Commissioners and their officials in all their dealings with this deserving and valuable class of men. The appeal is allowed.'

A. P. H.

The word 'Empire', we learn, is derived from the Sanskrit 'piparmi'. All the same we wouldn't dare talk about 'Piparmi Free Trade' to a Beaverbrook Crusader. (15.10.30.)

'GÖLFERDÄMMERUNG'

There is much instruction and entertainment to be derived from a study of German Opera as set out in the catalogues of our leading gramophone companies. There is a certain feeling of superiority in being able to follow the story of the opera by a study of the titles of the records, some of which are easily comprehensible even without the helpful translations given in brackets.

This pursuit has so far attracted me that I have written an opera myself—*Gölferdämmerung*, which is to form part of the massive 'Links' cycle. There is no music yet, just the titles of the Arias, Recits., and things.

‘Gölferdämmerung’

The Overture, when written, will introduce the leading *motifs* of the work—the Fairway Music, announced by the Wood-wind and taken up by the Brass, gradually giving way to the Undergrowth Music.

There is not space here for a full description of the work, so I will just reproduce it as it will appear in the record catalogues and sit back and wait for orders from the gramophone companies. The cast is not given here because it is impossible to tell which of our present operatic stars will still be in their prime when the music is finished.

GÖLFERDÄMMERUNG

(*The Eclipse of the Golfers*)

An Opera in Three Acts. Libretto and music by
P. APRICOT

BERTRAM (Falsetto). *A Rabbit.*

ARTHUR (Tenor). *Another.*

BERTHA (Soprano). *A Linkmaiden.*

THE CADDY-MASTER (Baritone).

THE BORE (Bass).

Chorus of Mastergolfers, Linkmaidens, Caddies.

Fourteen Apricot Label Records, 8s. 6d. each.

The set in Album, £5 19s. 6d.

ACT I

A. 1940. Overture. Parts I and II.

A. 1941. Chor der Golfclubtrager (Chorus of Caddies). Meistergolfclubtragerslied, ‘Sieh’ hier zwei Opfer’ (‘Lo, Here Two Victims!’) (Caddy-Master’s song).

A. 1942. Kaninchen treten auf (Entry of Rabbits).

BERTRAM and ARTHUR:

‘Wie grun die Links!’ (‘How green the Links!’)

A. 1943. Schonwegmusik (Fairway Music).

Lied der Linkjungfrauen (Linkmaidens’ Song).

‘Gölferdämmerung’

A. 1944. (a) ARTHUR:

‘Was meinen diese Altenweiber? Sie winken uns nicht heran’ (‘What mean these hags? They do not wave us on’).

(b) ARTHUR and BERTRAM:

‘Achtung! Achtung!’ (‘Fore! Fore!’)

BERTHA:

‘Schwestern, warten während ich den Puff schwinge’ (‘Wait, sisters, while I wield the puff’).

A. 1945. Prelude.

ACT II

Musik in den Dornenhecken (Undergrowth Music).

A. 1946. (a) BERTRAM:

‘Lebewohl, O Silberkönig!’ (‘Farewell, O Silver King!’)

(b) BERTRAM:

‘Weh! Mir verloren!’ (‘Woe, I have lost him!’)

A. 1946 (a) ARTHUR:

(contd.).

‘Er kehrt nicht zurück’ (‘He will return no more’).

(b) BERTRAM:

‘O dreimal verfluchter Wald!’ (‘O thrice accursed wood!’)

A. 1947. ARTHUR:

‘Mein Ziel! Was sagst du, Bertram!’ (‘My hole! What say you, Bertram!’)

BERTRAM:

‘Sieh’ hier, reisse ich meine Karte in zwei’ (‘See here, I rend my card in twain’).

Hazardmusik (Bunker Music).

A. 1948. ARTHUR:

Zählerslied (Counting Song), ‘Sieben, acht, neun, zehn’ (‘Seven, eight, nine, ten’).

A. 1949. BERTRAM and ARTHUR:

‘Kraftlos heimwärts schwankend’ (‘Weakly homewards staggering’).

Closing Scene.

‘Gölferdämmerung’

ACT III

A. 1950. (a) Eintritt der Golfer in die Bar (Entry of Golfers into the bar).

(b) Chor der Meistergolfer (Chorus of Scratch Men).

A. 1950. BERTRAM:

‘Zwei Grosse, Herr Ober!’ (‘Two long ones, Waiter!’)

A. 1951 Lied des langweiligen Erzählers (Bore’s Song).

and ‘Gestern Abend als ich nach dem ersten Ziel’ (‘Yester’en while driving at the first’).

A. 1952. Schlummer musik (Slumber Music).

In the actual performance of Act III, the Bore’s Song, which is cut down on the records by omitting the last ten holes and the rather fine description of the stymie at the third, lasts for two hours.

P. A. H.

‘Scarface’ Al Capone is reported to be organising the Chicago Association of Gravediggers. Is he guaranteeing increased business? (5.11.30.)

*Mr. Punch much regrets to record the sad fate
Which has smitten a musical critic of late,
For his highly strung nerves have become such a nuisance
That he can’t any more say ‘Oboe’ to a Goossens.*

SALUTATION TO SLEUTHS!

(A fire-side greeting on Christmas Eve from a doting admirer of detective yarns).

*Now is there mirth
In heaven and earth,
So fetch me books to read,
Where, found at dawn,
On frost-white lawn,
Mysterious brokers bleed!*

Salutation to Sleuths

*Now is the time
When church bells chime
And merrily sings the choir;
So bate my breath
With tales of death
And boots stamped deep in mire.*

*Who put those bits
Of Mrs. Fritz
Into a cask like that?
Remains no clue
Save one old shoe
And a bashed-in top hat.*

*From chandeliers
White-whiskered peers
Hang downwards circling slow;
Was it the heir
That shoved them there,
Festooned with mistletoe?*

*What child of sin
Did uncle in
Whilst listening to the waits?
Inspector Cobb
Is on the job,
Nosing the churchyard gates.*

*Sir Ralph gone west!
I might have guessed;
Stained is the wintry loam!
The dear old trout
Had just gone out
To drag the Yule-log home.*

*Sit down and dream
What time the scream
Was heard by Joyce, and who*

Salutation to Sleuths

*Had most the chance
To leave the dance
And chop poor Charles in two.*

*Sit down and think
What subtle link
Of reasoning yet is loose
In the strong chain
Connecting Jane
With arsenic in the goose.*

*With gyves in hand,
A god-like band,
The gay detectives come;
With laugh and song
They join the throng
With wassail-bowls of rum.*

*They share the feast,
They view the deceased,
Immaculate, well-bred
They question all,
They leave The Hall
With fragments of the dead.*

*So give me books
On murderous crooks
For right good Christmas cheer!
With guns and dope,
With hempen rope
Swing in the glad New Year!*

E. V. K. (*Evøe*).

A music-hall comedian has written a song about the chefs of Soho. Suggested title: 'Men of Garlic?' (24.12.30.)

Who would be a Blood Sport?

WHO WOULD BE A BLOOD SPORT?

I am not one of those townsmen who are no sooner in the country than they are assailed by the Urge-to-Slaughter. But I must admit that something primeval in me stirred when, searching hopelessly for Timbo's lead in the chaos of the Rectory boot cupboard, I came upon one of those deadly-looking guns, small and very blue, the sort with a button in the middle which when pressed causes it to fall instantly to pieces in the poacher's hand.

I shut Timbo adroitly into the cupboard and bore my find in triumph to John's study. He was contemplating a half-written sermon with evident distaste.

'I am just drawing an interesting parallel between the Flood and the present industrial situation,' he said. 'It seems to me that the Ark, standing as it does for the conservation of essentials, makes a pretty——'

'Please,' I begged, 'don't spoil it for me. I've got to listen to it to-morrow.'

'I was going to ask your advice, as a man of the world,' said John, a little huffily.

'Oh well, keep it brief, and don't forget the broad general principles. There's nothing like them. You remember what Marco Polo said in 1281. Have you any cartridges for this?'

'You'll find some on the upper shelf in the biscuit tin. That gun's a lot more lethal than it looks—I got a rabbit with it the other day at forty yards—so have a care. I should lock up Timbo and the children if I were you. The trouble about using Noah is——'

I shut the door quietly.

The Rectory meadow is a rather neat oblong. It is bounded by Farmer Gubb's mangels, a pine coppice at the end of the Squire's land, a stretch of open heath, and John's garden. Dotted about it are a few large oak trees, and at one end (the mangel one) are some vacant pigsties.

While I was trying out the gun's balance I heard a warning caw, and a rook flapped pompously towards me. It was an augury, I felt as I pressed the trigger, which presaged happily for the morning's sport.

Who would be a Blood Sport?

The bird gave an impudent cackle, and when a little later the smoke cleared, I watched it fly ponderously out of sight. The gun wanted knowing. I slipped another cartridge into its breach, lit a pipe and tiptoed warily along the hedge.

I hadn't long to wait. A brace of large grey birds, which I took to be either sea-gulls or escaped parrots, swooped down and settled in the top branches of an oak-tree. I began to stalk them, holding the gun behind my back and registering a look at once humane and vaguely vegetarian. Half-way across I was observed. One of them set up a kind of muffled hooting, and as I reached the foot of the tree they broke together into little cheeps of welcome. For a moment I had qualms, they seemed so pleasant and friendly; but I steeled myself. They should have a sporting chance and no more.

'Go away,' I cried.

One of the birds pecked the other mischievously in the ribs, and they both guffawed.

'Boo!' I yelled. 'Garn!'

They rocked gently to and fro on the bough. The fluffier one blew out its chest and let off an affected wheep.

I waved the gun at them. I shouted the kind of noises that you get when tuning-in by mistake to Copenhagen. I cast a number of aspersions. Finally I picked up a half-brick and cast that.

They rose, hovering about me and protesting in little squeals indicative of high dudgeon and umbrage. They made a fine vertical shot and I took it. . . . As they made for the Rectory chimney-stack they said such hard things about me in such shrill tones that my ears went pink with shame.

I began to doubt, as I made my way to the pigsties, that story of Jefferson's of how he had scuppered an eagle, firing from his hip-pocket and the observation-car of a funicular in the Andes. It ceased to seem so plausible.

By the sties there was a queer scuffling noise and a rabbit ran out between my legs. It tripped me, but as I sat down I contrived to cover its stern and let drive. Before it stepped into its burrow it gave me a look which I shall not soon forget.

In the shelter of the pigsty wall I waited relentlessly. For what,

Who would be a Blood Sport?

I was uncertain. I fingered the trigger, a cold and predatory glint in both my eyes.

There was suddenly a tremendous whirr and for a moment the sun was eclipsed. A large bird, half-way between a feather-boia and a Handley-Page, alighted on the wall beside me. It kept up a low explosive murmur as if its engines had been left running.

I picked a cartridge from my pocket and hurled it, catching the bustard (if it was that) full upon the nose. Almost as it took the air I fired. . . . The smoke hung thickly over the sties. As I ran out to attend to the corpse I saw it, already at a great altitude, droning across the coppice.

I was seized with a quick and terrible anger. John had got a rabbit at forty yards. Jefferson had bagged, he said, eighty brace of something last week in Norfolk. Was I so innocuous that I was to become a sort of perambulating bird-sanctuary?

On the pigsty roof behind me, about three yards away, there sat quite still one of those impertinent light-blue birds, very tiny, the kind that looks much more effective in a cage. It chirruped vulgarly.

Fixing the gun in the gutter with painstaking precision, I levelled the sights on the middle of the bird. Never I pondered as I drew the trigger lovingly towards me, had fowl been so near Nirvana. . . . Through the pall of smoke, with devastating clarity, there came a second and a louder chirrup.

I left the gun where it was, wedged in the gutter. I didn't wait to knock at the door of John's study.

'That strip of tired gas-piping,' I said curtly, 'you'll find it in the pigsties.'

'Gas-piping? My .410? My dear fellow, the other day I potted a bun——'

'Ha! At what distance? At forty yards?' I laughed dramatically. 'Well, let me tell you, it'd be a rest-cure to an insect to be sitting in the barrel when the darned thing goes off. It wouldn't even get its liver shaken up.'

Without mincing my idiom I told him of the infuriating chirrup. He got up and went across to the shelf. There was an ominous silence.

Who would be a Blood Sport?

'Did I say the biscuit tin? I say, old man, I'm frightfully sorry. Those are blanks.'

'Blanks?' I echoed. An amazing suspicion crossed my mind. 'Blanks, John? You, the gunman parson? You haven't gone soft about blood sports?'

A look of pain crossed his face at the suggestion.

'These were left over from starting the Sunday School Sports,' he said.

It seemed a pity that he was my host.

E. K. (*Eric*).

'What is more pleasant than a cold bath before breakfast?' asks a writer. The answer of course is: No cold bath before breakfast. (21.1.31.)

COUNTER-CLAIM

It is carrying things a little too far, I always think, when a person puts a three-halfpenny stamp on an envelope containing a bill. It is an unworthy subterfuge and one not in keeping with our English tradition of fair play and cleanly sport. This condemnation applies with double pertinence to demands for subscriptions. Last week it was the Golf Club. They said:

The Club House, Ashmere.
Feb., 1931.

P. APRICOT, ESQ.,

Dear Sir,—Your subscription, £7 7s. od., was due on April 1st last. In order to facilitate bookkeeping, etc., we should be pleased to receive your cheque for the above-mentioned amount at your earliest convenience.

Yours faithfully,
A. BOGEY (*Col.*) } *Joint Hon. Secs.*
J. SMITH }

They are quite right when they say that my subscription is seven guineas and that it is unpaid. At the same time they cannot by any stretch of imagination make out that I owe them anything. In fact,

Counter Claim

the weight is on the wrong foot, as we golfers say when the ball goes sideways and along instead of forwards and upwards. After careful calculation I have set the matter right by producing and despatching a counter claim as under:

The Hon. Secs., Ashmere Golf Club, Ashmere.

Drs. to P. Apricot,
'The Tump,' Ashmere.

	£	s.	d.
To keeping the rough under control by constant attention ..	0	10	0
To clipping, pruning and plashing bushes at 5th, 7th, 13th, 14th, 17th and 18th holes	0	5	0
To professional treatment of beech-trees at the turn ..	0	2	0
To turning over and resetting portions of fairway ..	0	10	0
To redistribution of sand in bunkers	0	2	6
To twenty balls, most of them practically unused, which have doubtless found their way into your professional's repaint department	1	15	0
To Rodeo work at the turn—two separate half-hours of piece-work stemming a swarm of cows, heifers and things that were coming through a hole in the fence, at 2s. 4d. per hour (unskilled agricultural labour)	0	2	4
To failing to reach and kill with brassie shot one sheep which stood sneering twenty yards from my ball in a direct line with the hole, thus saving damages which would have been chargeable to the Club. (Estimated in accordance with the B.B.C.'s Fat Stock Prices for Golfers)	3	0	0
To addressing one grass-snake with mashie-niblick ..	0	0	3
To killing same with same	0	0	6
10% commission on green fees when invaded by four golfing friends on Whit Monday	0	2	0
10% commission on sale of alcoholic liquor consumed by above at your 19th hole	0	5	4
To preservation of greens by picking up at 33% of the holes on every round	0	5	0
Rebate on caddies' fees for uncompleted rounds	0	5	0
To saving of clerical work on the part of your Committee by having a handicap of 24 for life	0	5	0
To cards which I might have taken out if I had thought it worth while	0	4	8
	<hr/> £7 14 7 <hr/>		

Counter Claim

I enclose a note saying that I should be pleased to receive your cheque for 7s. 7d., or would they leave an order with the Pro. to supply me with either three new balls and a penny tee, or with seven repaints and two of those homing tees with tassels at 3½d. each?

So far there have been no developments in the matter. I have only been down to the Club House once since, and then the only person about was the Pro.'s boy. I did not worry him about the balls and the tee in case the Committee had not put the matter through.

There was rather a rude notice on the Men's board about players whose subscriptions were in arrear not being allowed to enter for the monthly medal competitions. That doesn't worry me; I never was one for decorations. Which reminds me that I should have thought of 'To refraining from entering for competitions' as one of the items of my counter claim. •

P. A. H.

THE OWNER-DRIVER AND THE MAGISTRATE

A Fable

Now there was a certain Owner-Driver who, after making a Night of it, was Piloting his Chariot along a ticklish Stretch of the Highway when he was Accosted by a Custodian in Blue, who Asseverated that the Owner-Driver was under the Influence of Bacchic Juices.

And in due course the Owner-Driver was Arraigned at an appropriate Palace of Justice, where there were three Charioteers in Like Case waiting to Plead; and the Owner-Driver listened with Peculiar Interest as in Turn they pointed out to the Magistrate that it was all a Mistake, since each one Severally had imbibed but a Modicum of Ordinary Wine or a small Measure or Two of an Innocuous Malt Liqueur, and that their Erratic Driving was not to be Ascribed to Indiscreet Potations but to the Toxic Effect (1) of Cocaine at the dentist's, (2) of Bella Donna at the oculist's and (3) of Anxiety over the Chronic Neuritis of a Favourite Aunt, respectively.

Now it happened that on his Way to the Palace of Justice the

The Owner-Driver and the Magistrate

Magistrate had escaped Death from a Straight Six only by a Display of Agility well-nigh Incredible in one of his Years, and had besides been dubbed a Jay-Walker; and as he took his seat to Dispense Justice he was not in the Mood to allow his Judgment to be Deflected by Mistaken Tolerance, so that the Pleadings of the Three Charioteers cut very little Ice with him, and he told them that only by a great Effort could he Dissuade himself from Incarcerating them and Let them Off with a Swingeing Fine.

When it came to the turn of the Owner-Driver to take his Stand at the Bar of Justice he was Very Downcast; for the Tale that he was going to Tell seemed Wholly Inadequate now that the more ingenious Pleadings of the others had been of No Avail. Moreover, the Cynical stare of the Magistrate Short-Circuited his Resource and Blew Out the Fuse of his Invention. But as he stood with a Blank Expression there Suddenly came to his mind the long-neglected Apostrophe of his Sunday-School Monitress on the Value of Veracity, and without knowing Quite what he did he Committed himself to the Desperate Expedient of telling the Truth, saying:

'I must Admit that I had been Wassailing. I was, Indubitably, One over the Eight, and I am glad that the Timely Intervention of the Custodian checked my Career before I had Winged an innocent Pedestrian.'

For some moments the Magistrate pondered over this Defence before he replied sternly: 'In all these Cases I am Accustomed to the Wildest Prevarication and Hard Swearing. I have no Reason to Assume that you are an Exception. What is the latent Subtlety of your novel Defence is altogether Beyond me, but as a matter of Routine and Consistency I must Refuse to Believe a Word you Say. I am Therefore forced to the Conclusion that you were, in fact, Stone Cold Sober, and That Being So, I must reluctantly Discharge you without a Stain on your Character.'

Moral: In Peculiar Circumstances the Truth may be found to Prevail.

A. J. T.

Rome v. Tuscans

'A sharp nose indicates curiosity,' says a critic. A flattened nose often indicates too much curiosity. (18.2.31.)

ROME v. TUSCANS

*(A Classical Broadcast following the lines of
"The Lays of Ancient Rome")*

Good afternoon, everybody! Here we are in our box which is situated just opposite the Rome entrance to the bridge. It is a very fine day; the sun is shining on the Tiber, which is flowing from our right towards our left—that is to say, from east to west. I think that the weather conditions should be ideal this afternoon—don't you? *(Yes, it certainly is very fine at present.)*

There is a tremendous crowd here. In fact, Mr. Aside and myself had some difficulty in getting through to our box—didn't we? *(Yes, we did.)* Perhaps you can hear the shouting. Well, as I said before, it is a very fine day and the sun is shining as it usually does on fine days of—er—this sort of a fine day.

Hello! The Senate have just come out. They are holding a council just in front of our box, by the river gate. *(The Senate are examining the pitch in verse 19.)* Hello! Here is a messenger—at least I think it is a messenger. *(Yes it's a messenger.)* I expect that means that the Tuscans have arrived. Yes, there they are. I can just see them through my glasses. I can see Cilnius; he's coming this way on a fleet roan *(Verse 23)*. There's Tolumnius. *(Still Verse 23—I believe that's Astur as a matter of fact.)* Yes, I beg your pardon, that is Astur. Perhaps I'd better repeat that. Astur has just come on to the field—not Tolumnius. He is carrying a fourfold shield. I can see Verbenna. Hello! Who's that rolling up in an ivory car? *(Just inside verse 24? That must be Lars Porsena himself.)* Yes, so it is. Lars Porsena has just come on; Mamilius is there; Sextus. . . . *(Would that be the 'false' Sextus? Yes, the one that wrought the deed of shame.)*

There is a great deal of excitement among the crowd now that they have recognised Sextus. I am afraid that he is not very popular with the Roman crowds. There is a good deal of hissing from the

Rome v. Tuscans

ladies on the roof-tops (*Verse 25*); some of them are spitting. I shouldn't think, as a matter of fact, that they have a very good chance of hitting him at that distance—should you? (*No, the wind's wrong for that sort of thing to-day.*)

I think that I have said before that there is a tremendous crowd here. I'll just ask the Consul how many he thinks there are here. Excuse me just one moment.

The Consul says that he doesn't care. His brow is sad and his speech was rather unnecessarily low. Perhaps you heard that cheering. It means that Horatius has just appeared. The bookmakers are laying fearful odds, as usual. Horatius is in the centre. Spurius Lartius on his right (*Lartius plays for the Ramnians*); Herminius left (*Verse 30*). It must be nearly time to start now. They are tightening their harness on their backs. We shan't be long now. The Tuscans are just getting ready to blow four hundred trumpets. There they go. They're off!

There seems to be a good deal of amusement among the Tuscans. (*Yes, they are very much amused about something.*) The Tuscans are attacking (*Verse 36*). Aunus is tackled by Lartius. Seius is going on—he's through!—no. Herminius has clove—cleft, sorry—cleft him to the chin—a very smart piece of cleavage that—they're going on—Picus is stopped by Horatius—a very exciting attack.

The Tuscans are coming on again—Ocnus, Lausulus, Aruns are well in front. Oh, magnificent tackle, Sir!—Herminius brought down Aruns just when he looked certain to get through. By Jove! Did you see that? (*Yes, I saw that—Verse 39.*) You may have heard a sound of falling tinware—that was Lartius bringing Ocnus down. The Tuscans are attacking very strongly, but Horatius is very safe; Lausulus never looked like getting through there—Horatius is playing a magnificent game. (*Yes, a great game.*)

Hello! What's up now? The crowd are all shouting 'Astur'. Astur is coming on now—he's almost over—he's through—no—Horatius goes to tackle him—Horatius is hurt—he's leaning on Herminius—he seems to be all right now. Oh, well done, Sir! Horatius has just stopped Astur—really remarkable it was—he sprang at his face and got him with his sword right through his head. From where

Rome v. Tuscans

we are we can just see the sword standing out behind Astur's head—about a handbreadth, I should say. (*Yes, about a handbreadth. Verse 45.*)

Ha—ha—ha! That really was most comic. Rather an amusing incident has just occurred on the Tuscan side. They are in rather a clumsy formation, and just when the people in front were falling back before the Roman attack, the people behind were trying to press forward. (*Those behind cried 'Forward!' and those before cried 'Back!' Verse 50.*)

Sextus is well in the front now. He hasn't been very prominent so far. He's not playing his usual game by any means. What on earth is he trying to do? Sextus has just gone backwards and forwards three times. He has made no ground at all. I think that perhaps the unfortunate reception of the crowd may have put him off a bit. (*Verse 53.*)

The Consul is leading an attack on the blind side of the bridge (*Verse 53.*) We have seen a very even game so far, and I think that, although the Tuscans have done more pressing, if the Consul can break through the bridge Rome should be able to save the game at any rate. He's done it! Herminius is falling back—Lartius joins him—Horatius is badly out of position, his first mistake this afternoon. (*Verse 54, just inside the Tuscan half.*) Horatius is handing off Sextus. He's broken away—he's in—he's in! The Tuscans can't win now. Horatius is just swimming back. Time!

Well, it has been a wonderful struggle. Horatius has had a great day and without exaggeration I think we may say that he has saved Rome. The Tuscans looked very dangerous, but Horatius managed to be there when he was wanted. I ought perhaps to mention Herminius and Lartius, who supported him very well indeed. I should say that their work will be remembered for a very long time to come. Well, we cannot spare any more time now. That concludes our commentary on Rome *versus* the Tuscans, which ended in a victory for Rome, the Consul managing to break through in the last minutes. Now we shall switch you over to the Studio. Good afternoon, everybody—good afternoon! (*"Noon."*)

P. A. H.

The Blue Bulb

THE BLUE BULB

Notes During January.

Bought purple cushions for drawing-room. Charming.

Aunt Julia to tea. Says 'blue the inevitable apex and keystone to drawing-room colour-structure'; 'purple cushions a jangling colour-discord in tone harmony'. Rot!

Aunt Julia has sent blue hyacinth bulb. Have planted it in red bowl and am keeping it in kitchen.

FEBRUARY

Blue bulb showing green tip. Must be kept warm, I suppose, so have put it on mantelpiece over stove.

Blue bulb's green tip rather yellow this afternoon. Too dry on mantelpiece perhaps. Have watered it thoroughly and moved it to sunshine on window-sill. Looks better.

Sun went in. Bulb not so well this morning owing to thorough watering and frost. Have moved it to warm corner by copper in scullery.

Blue bulb rather discouraged owing to mice in scullery. Have moved it back to mantelpiece. Cook has promised to keep an eye on it.

Cook's eye not beneficial to blue bulb. She explained that she thought it looked dry and gave it a little water, but blue bulb not amphibious and looks seedy.

Have moved it to dining-room. Red bowl very ugly with magenta curtains.

MARCH

Afraid blue bulb quite dead. Yellowish-green tip very brown to-day. Am trying it on sunny table in drawing-room, but red bowl is 'colour discord' with purple cushions.

Blue bulb much better! Yellowish-green shoot with brown tip grown half an inch. Have recovered purple cushions to suit bowl.

Shoot grown another half-inch and bud almost showing.

Drawing-room seems to suit blue bulb. New orange cushions will look lovely against blue flowers, but perhaps red bowl is a bit crude.

The Blue Bulb

Blue bulb's bud much fatter and leaves a better green. Out by next week!

Dropped blue bulb in moving it from little table to window-sill in sunshine. Have replanted it in brownny-orange bowl which will harmonise with orange cushions and contrast with blue flowers. Bud very fat and healthy. Turning colour.

Still turning.

April 1st:—Blue bud turned and in full bloom. Pink.

P. FF.

Three characters in a new thriller get their throats cut in the first chapter. The story is written in the author's most jugular vein (11.3.31.)

OUR TUDOR COLONY

A peculiar feature of our life is the construction and reconstruction which are perpetually in progress. The genuine Tudor houses ought by all natural laws to have fallen to the ground long ago; they are sustained only by a protracted treatment of underpinning, buttressing, grouting and shoring-up. The Reproductions (or Fakes) were built in a cranky way to begin with, affecting the graceful dodderingness of an age that was not theirs, so that they too need to be underpinned, buttressed, grouted and shored-up. These needs have rendered necessary the permanent residence of Mr. Nancarrow.

Mr. Nancarrow professes to be a native of Cornwall, but after an interview you are more likely to assess the place of his origin as Sheffield. He lives somewhere inside an enclosure which grows a fine crop of ladders, tiles, bricks and weeds in the spaces lying between the sheds dotted about the area. His abode can hardly be called a residence or even a house; it is more aptly described as premises. In order to summon Mr. Nancarrow you have only to enter these premises and emit a cough, annunciatory in character, and the proprietor will appear.

He has erected a board: 'H. Nancarrow, Builder and Decorator,

Our Tudor Colony

Coldharbour and London', indicating that his interests are not only local but also metropolitan. He is, in fact, known to make occasional journeys to London for 'fixtures', but these dates, it is noticed, synchronise with fixtures at Hurst Park or Sandown. Similarly when he visits Brighton in search of fixtures it is recognised that on those days some unlucky greyhound is weighted with Mr. Nancarrow's (formerly our) money.

But usually he sits within his fence like a great lean spider and inevitably his prey approach him and are caught. Sooner or later some worried Tudorite will be found to enter and inform Mr. Nancarrow that he is doubtful about some wall or beam, that some chimney smokes or that moisture is visible above the damp-course. From that point Mr. Nancarrow wins all along the line.

Next day he descends with his bricklayers and plasterers, his carpenters and his hodmen, yea and all the host of hewers of wood and drawers of water. Townsfolk often complain that they cannot get men in to do this and that. Our difficulty is to get Mr. Nancarrow out. For he is very thorough. If a wall is shaky he enunciates with unction the slogan of an unadventurous generation, 'Safety First', and proceeds to perform on the wall the aforesaid operations, that is to say, he underpins, he buttresses, he grouts and he shores-up.

He next discovers a number of further weaknesses in the building and deals with them very faithfully. Before the house is, in his opinion, entirely safe, he has succeeded in holding with you a quantity of informal conversations. As the result of these, you find that you are committed to some new construction, some wood-barn or potting-shed for which you have not the slightest use. Mr. Nancarrow takes a fresh lease of your property and begins a new series of conversations which may result in your erecting cottages for your staff, unless you can induce one of your neighbours to call him off by making a noise suggestive of an underpin.

The more active members of the colony attempt to keep him at bay by executing their own minor repairs. This, it must be admitted, they do very ineffectually, but excuse themselves on the ground that it is better than calling in Nancarrow. They will have to admit him in the end, but meanwhile they are staving off the evil day.

Our Tudor Colony

One of the chief sources of Mr. Nancarrow's income is the Tudor wooden latch. Purbank of 'The Garth' started this thing and made it the vogue. Since then nobody has dared to own a Victorian latch with a revolving handle. Such a contrivance would be the epitome of bad form. The authentic Tudor fastening consists of a wooden latch-piece falling into a wooden slot; it is the kind familiarised by *Little Red Riding Hood*. On a celebrated occasion that clever child pulled the bobbin and the latch went up. In the Colony houses you usually pull the bobbin in jerks, the latch remaining unmoved, while at about the fifth jerk the thong breaks. You fall backward to the floor with the bobbin left in your hand. You get up with an entirely fresh admiration for *Little R.R.H.*

If you are inside the room it is easy enough to open the door by leaning your weight upon it, at the same time pushing the latch upwards with your hands. But if you are outside the room you see nothing but a handle fixed to the door and a thong of leather, with bobbin attached, issuing from a hole in the wood.

So, when the thong is broken, if there is nobody inside, that room is closed for good. This indeed is always happening somewhere in the Colony. If you see Poynter burgling one of his own windows with a sickle you know that somebody in his house has done the Tudor-latch trick. If you observe Fawcett mounting a ladder against his huge chimney and descending the latter inside from above you know exactly what domestic tragedy has occurred. Various techniques have been elaborated for exceptional rooms, but in most cases Mr. Nancarrow has to be called. If the windows of the closed room will not admit a human boy his method is to take out a pane of glass and through the orifice to poke at the latch with a long pole. If he is lucky and in good form he can make two more promising jobs by smashing the latch and damaging the plaster in the vicinity.

But apparently he overdid this, for lately he has restrained his ardour. Not that even now he sends you a bill merely saying:

						£	s.	d.
To lifting latch	..	..	..	..	..	0	1	0

Our Tudor Colony

It is more likely to read:

To raising and lowering ladders	..	..	..	0	2	6
To removing one pane glass, scraping old putty from same,						
replacing, cleaning and making good	..	..	..	0	7	6
To lifting latch	..	..	..	..	0	1 6
						£0 11 6

But here he rests content. Knowing Nancarrow as I do, I was long curious about this moderation.

So when my turn came my wits were on the alert. It was the bathroom door this time, and I sent hurriedly for Nancarrow. He came in person and I saw him leave very soon after. In a few days came in the usual bill for 11s. 6d.

I began to look into the matter. The window showed from inside no traces of pane-removal. I myself mounted my own ladder and examined the outside. There was no new putty visible—and yet the door had been opened.

Detective fiction has its uses. I approached the problem with a scientific spirit and a magnifying-glass and soon the dread secret of Nancarrow was revealed to me. At a suitable point in the door, just below the latch, a small hole had been pierced and afterwards filled with brown putty which was still fresh.

All that the rascal had done was to insert a piece of thick wire, having a head at its end, pull the door towards him by the fixed handle and at the same time turn his wire ever so slightly to lift the latch. The door opened with ease. Once I had wire of a suitable gauge I found I could do the trick over and over again. Examining the other doors, I found that they had all been bored and filled (evidently on Nancarrow's last visit) for just such an emergency.

'That was a very neat piece of work you did,' said I to Mr. Nancarrow. 'There wasn't a single trace left on the window. In fact it looked quite untouched. I had better settle your bill now.'

So saying, I handed him one shilling and sixpence with the bill.

And then I saw the true greatness of the man. Without a tremor he took the money and then solemnly subscribed to the bill, 'Paid in Full.—H. Nancarrow'.

E. P. W.

A Guide-Book to Insomnia

It is confidentially expected in many quarters that this year's Nobel Peace Prize will be awarded to the Madeira revolution. (22.4.31.)

A GUIDE-BOOK TO INSOMNIA

When last I couldn't sleep I created a dismal diversion by cataloguing the stages of my state. There were circumstances and tendencies, many of which so constantly accompany insomnia that I can only conclude that at least some universal symptoms are to be found among the purely superficial differences contingent upon our various private and business affairs:

I. VAIN REGRETS

(11.30 p.m.—1 a.m.)

My age. Agonising. Nothing to be done about it, so futile to worry. Go on worrying. Shall I get the elderly spread when I am forty? They do on paternal side of family. When my sight goes will people be kind to me? There are two grammatical mistakes in the fourth chapter of my new book. I never saw them till now. And the proofs have gone back. The book is in the press. *The book is in the press.*

I ought to have made that speech they asked for at the Quill Club. I could have written it and read it. And now the dinner's over and they'll never ask me again. And I shall only be remembered as a surly crab who never goes anywhere. . . .

My age, my age. . . .

2. MISCELLANEOUS APPREHENSIONS

(1—2 a.m.)

How easy it is for trustees to ruin one! I bet my Will will be mis-handled by my executors.

I know I shall be cremated by mistake or buried alive.

How hateful it would be if there were a person under my bed! I know it's not possible as there was nobody there when I got into bed, *but I don't like it.* Or if the wardrobe door suddenly opened

A Guide-Book to Insomnia

and a voice said, 'And *now* we can have a talk'. Or if a marionette show suddenly began on top of the wardrobe. Italian puppets and horrid tinkling music. . . . (*Five minutes consumed in composing with a dreadful felicity the tiny overture.*) It will be hurried *sotto-voce* music; cheerful, until you give it your whole attention, when you perceived that it has the sinister world-without-end quality of the music of the harlequinade:

Diddle-dee-dee!
Diddle-iddle-iddle-o?
Diddle-dee-dee?
Diddle-iddle-o,

\bar{B} flat minor, with a multitude of dotted notes. . . .

3. VOICES FROM NOWHERE

(2—2.15 a.m.)

These occur on those spasmodic occasions when at long last one is on the verge of dropping off to sleep. They are clear, thin, faintly telephonic remarks which have no known bearing on anything, as—

'But hospitals *don't*!'
and—

'James wouldn't like that.'

4. THE CLOCK or *Tick Douloureux*.

(2.15—2.30 a.m.)

If they are conscientious and truthful most people will bear me out when I state that the behaviour of any clock at night is completely different from its behaviour during the day. In a word, it varies its *tempo* in the small hours, presumably to make our insomnia more interesting. Note this, that, whereas it occasionally indulges in a trifle of syncopation at night, its principle feat is a greatly accelerated action of the works and an incredibly increased volume of sound.

In the day (*piano, allegro*). Tick-tick, tick-tick.

At night (*forte, prestissimo*). Tick, tick, TICK-tick.

A Guide-Book to Insomnia

The reactions of the insomniac are (a) A remote expectancy of the clock blowing up, and (b) The conviction that it may know the Morse or some psychic code and be sending one some urgent and unpleasant warning.

5. THE FURNITURE

(2.30—3 a.m.)

In the small hours the objects in one's bedroom, led (in my case) by the spring-mattress, the bookshelf and the shoe-cupboard, with intermittent assistance from the syphon on the washstand, have a really heavenly time, in which they get off their chests the accumulated opinions of hours, to which one listens in a sweat.

It is a musical evening in which minstrelsy and good talk play equal parts.

The spring-mattress commonly opens with a not too discreditable passage of roulades taken from the prelude to *Valse des Fleurs*, from the *Casse-noisette* suite or from the *Danses Sacrées et Profanes* of Debussy (also arranged for the harp), to which the bookshelf, after a pause of appreciation, responds 'Lock!' The mattress, gratified, says 'Bilk', adding 'Ping'.

This exchange goes on for some minutes, with agonising pauses filled in by obscure rustlings and creaks from the shoe-cupboard. When they have apparently talked and played themselves out a fourth voice says hoarsely, 'Urk! URRR—Urrr'.

I ponder this, unhappily, for ten minutes. Then—'Flip, flip, flip. Frizzle-wizzle-wizzle . . . orr—rrrr'.

I finally identify it as being the syphon.

6. CONCERTO

(3—3.45 a.m.)

This represents a pot-pourri of the evening's repertoire and is only suffered in acute cases.

'Urk!'

'He never said so!'

'Ping!'

(My age!)

A Guide-Book to Insomnia

'Fiddle-diddle-o??'

(I *won't* be cremated.)

'Tick-tick, ticktick-tick. . . .'

'Wholemeal puddings.'

'LONK!'

(The proofs have gone back.)

At this point sleep really comes—until the dawn.

The dawn! Why will nobody be honest about it? Grey, depressing, too light to sleep, too dark to read, too early for the milkman (though not for the cats), and rendered tiresome by the birds, who never seem to be willing or able to perform their awakening simultaneously. There is always a leader who is perennially unsuccessful in his efforts to get them up. He is supported by one bird only. Always.

Leader. Heep. (*Long pause.*)

Leader. Heep-heep.

Supporter. Chip. (*Dead silence for fifteen minutes.*)

Leader. Fritter?

Supporter. Fritter-witter. (*Nothing doing for another quarter-hour, when all awake, and fritters and chips are made in incredible quantities and at top speed.*)

By the time one is asleep again it is also time to get up.

R. F. (*Rachel*).

A Chicago murderer has been arrested and convicted within twelve hours of the killing of his victim. Gangsters are said to be protesting against the law not being allowed to take its course. (13.5.31.)

OUTPOSTS OF EMPIRE

ICED POLLY

Austin and I are just home from Nigeria on leave. One goes out there all clothes and no money and comes back all money and no clothes—with a parrot.

Outposts of Empire

The parrot is inevitable. The quaint pottery you bought at Kano is smashed on the way down country. The bundle of spears you left outside your sleeping-compartment on the train has been sold to someone in the third class by the train-steward. The skin of the crocodile you shot two months back, inoffensive to the noses of your black staff, raised such a storm of protest on the platform at Kaduna that you joined in the outcry of the Europeans gathered there, even to participating in the search for the miscreant owner, and left it there.

Therefore you are left on the wharf at Lagos, devoid of any tangible evidence of ever having been in darkest Africa. You cannot turn up in Little Ditchling like that. You might as well have been to Southend.

So you hurriedly purchase a parrot, African, grey, with red tail, complete with cage ('Five bob, Sah! Savvy talk-palaver too much!') from the many hundreds on the wharf, and proceed up the gangway and into the smoking-room of the boat with an embarrassment that slowly fades as you remark that a Resident, Northern Provinces, and the Director P.W.D. are similarly laden and embarrassed.

Written law has decreed that, be your livestock anything from an elephant to a tortoise, it shall be handed to the care of the ship's butcher for the voyage home. Cabins are barred. This came about when the West Coast grew respectable, as the unregenerate Coaster of old, seeing strange animals in his cabin, was delayed in his recovery by uncertainty as to whether they were real or not.

Austin and I, with some score of other parrot fanciers, sought the underworld and deposited our links with Africa under the protection of the butcher, who swore a fortnight's devotion to their care and forthwith consigned them to the hold. Identification of grey parrots being impossible, we pencilled initials on the wooden cages.

Two days afterwards, at breakfast, the table-steward passed the stirring news that pets were taking the sun 'foward'. We found them—some monkeys, a small wart-hog and the parrots—regarding the creaming surface of the Bight of Benin with disapproval. The parrots seemed a disconsolate lot, rheumy-eyed, and any desire

Outposts of Empire

to talk was well dissimulated. Austin cheered his up by prodding it with a piece of straw. Mine, I noticed, kept one eye closed in a permanent wink, appearing dead if approached from the left, and of a startling malignancy viewed from the right.

Shortly after that the weather grew cooler. I was playing deck-tennis when I saw the head and shoulders of Austin appear up the ladder-way from the lower deck.

'Alphonse' (the bird came from French Dahomey) 'is no more,' he said. 'The butcher thinks he ate some rope. But he's a good bloke, the butcher; he let me have one of his own for seven-and-six.'

Next morning I went down to the hold. In the dark interior I heard the butcher talking to someone. 'Very 'ard luck, Sir! but they goes off terrible about 'ere. Delikit lungs, Sir, 'as parrots, and when we gets into the Trade winds we mostly loses 'arf of them.'

I heard a voice make reply. 'Well, chuck him overboard. There's no need to slow down the boat. And heres something for your trouble. You don't happen to know if one of the crew wants to sell a parrot, do you?'

'I *was* taking a couple or so 'ome for myself, Sir; but if you wants one bad—well, 'ow'll ten bob suit, Sir? Thank you, Sir. I'll put one in your cage during the day.'

Full of foreboding, I approached my cage. An aura of death hung about it. On the bottom, his head pillowed by sunflower seeds, and both eyes closed, lay the bird. I lifted him out. He must have been dead some time, for he was remarkably stiff and cold. He had apparently died in a cold sweat, as an icy dew lay upon his plumage.

Over my shoulder the butcher was talking. 'I was a-coming to look for you, Sir. Went off in the night, 'e did, Sir. It's this 'ere cold wind. If they gets past the Islands they're all right, but it's the sudden change.'

I fell, too. He said he would 'try' to let me have another, and did so. Fifteen shillings.

Two days later it became a panic. Three or four died a day, and were found stiff and cold by their owners. The butcher had replaced about a dozen, and could be urged to use his influence with the crew for replacements. The price went to a pound.

Outposts of Empire

Sorrowing knots of parrot-owners met in groups of sympathy about the deck, to endure the gibes of their fellow-men.

'The butcher's sold another couple of brace,' one would say.

'Yes. It's a chill wind,' etc., would be the reply.

Then some ass said it was paratyphoid, and suggested that the survivors should be cremated under the boilers.

My first suspicion of the ramp was when I went below with Bennington, to give our parrots a final look over. We were landing at Plymouth next day, and didn't want to take corpses ashore. I had a look at his bird.

I could have sworn to the owner of that solitary evil eye.

'Bennington, where did you get that bird?'

'From the butcher, old man. Third replacement. C3, I know; called up in the last lot.'

Going ashore next day, I made for the landing-stage carrying overcoat and parrot. In an attitude of expectancy by the head of the gangway stood Sims, the deck-steward, receiving largesse.

'Parrot all right, Sir?' he grinned.

'Yes, Sims. Tough bird, this. One of the butcher's own. He must have sold about forty.'

Sims thrust his face forward, talking low. 'Im! 'E never 'ad no forty parrots! Keeps 'arf a dozen frozen ones on ice, 'e do, reglar, in the refrigerator. Swops 'em round, like. Out comes yours and in goes a stiff 'un! And you buys another gent's parrot because you've got a empty cage.'

T. R. H.

SIMPLE STORIES

THE DIVORCE CASE

When Mr. and Mrs. Titubate had been married about ten years Mrs. Titubate found that she didn't love Mr. Titubate any longer, and she thought it was more honest to say so instead of going on pretending.

And Mr. Titubate said I have noticed lately that you have always blinked when I kissed you, but I thought it was because you didn't

Simple Stories

like the smell of my cigars. And she said well they do smell rather like bad drains, but I could put up with that if I didn't find you so revolting in other ways, and it is growing on me, I think we had better have a divorce, it will be better to have it now, as if we put it off I might be too old for somebody else to want to marry me. I like the idea of being married, the only thing I object to is being married to you.

And Mr. Titubate said, well it hasn't turned out quite as I thought it would when I married you, you are beginning to get fat through eating too many chocolate creams. And she said that's right, be a brute, I shan't have to put up with it much longer. And he said I shouldn't have mentioned it if you hadn't said you had left off loving me, what with business and golf I have a lot to think of besides being a husband, what about the children?

And she said, oh of course I must have them, at their age they couldn't do without a mother's care, and you must give me enough money to have a nice house for them and a governess, and to keep a motor-car, but they shall come and see you sometimes, and I shan't speak against you to them more than I can help, if I am not always being aggravated by having to live in the same house with you I daresay I shall come to think of you more kindly.

Well, Mr. Titubate loved his four children and he really loved Mrs. Titubate more than he made out, and it was only because he was wounded to the heart by her saying she didn't love him any more that he said that about her getting fat, which he didn't really mind as he was getting rather fat himself. So he said he would think about it, but he had already made up his mind not to have a divorce and the next morning he told her so.

Well, that made her all the more determined to have one, and she said to him I should have let you off being shown up in the newspapers if you had been reasonable about it, but now we shall have to have a regular divorce case, and I shall take the children to stay with mother until it is all over.

So she did that, and her mother whose name was Mrs. Humid was quite on her side, and she said if she had known what Mr. Titubate was like she would have let herself be stretched dead on the floor

Simple Stories

before she would have allowed her to marry him. And he was very miserable at being left alone in the house, and played golf so badly that his handicap was put up from eighteen to twenty-four, and he had to have dinner at the most expensive restaurants so as to be able to eat anything at all.

Well, the trial came on and one thing that was brought up against Mr. Titubate which he hadn't expected was that he was in love with the cashier in his office whose name was Miss Linseed, which he wasn't at all as she was too scraggy for him, and he hardly ever spoke to her except to draw five pounds from petty cash, but he had done that so often since Mrs. Titubate had left him that they said it was quite plain that he had made it the excuse for talking to Miss Linseed. And it didn't make it any better for him when he said that he had drawn more from petty cash than usual so as to pay for having dinners at restaurants and going to theatres, because they said that if he loved Mrs. Titubate as much as he said he did he would have spent his evenings at home listening to talks on the wireless instead of going out and enjoying himself.

Well, the judge had been rather in his favour up till then on account of his saying that he still loved Mrs. Titubate, because he loved his own wife and hardly ever gave a verdict without asking her opinion about it first. But when it came out about Mr. Titubate saying that Mrs. Titubate was getting fat he turned against him, and he said my own wife is so fat that she can't go upstairs any longer, and I have had to instal a lift in my residence, but she is still the joy of my home and if she were to die, which she will if she is not a little more careful about potatoes and pastry, I should think twice before I fell in love with anyone else. When a man conjoins himself in matrimony with a woman he takes her for richer for poorer, for fatter for thinner, and the prisoner at the bar doesn't seem to have thought of that.

Well, it looked as if the case was as good as over after that, but when the barrister who was in favour of Mr. Titubate made his speech he poured scorn on what the judge had said, and he told the jury that the judge had had his verdicts upset several times through being weak in his law, and he produced a notice from the Dean of

Simple Stories

the College he had been at as a young man gating him at eight o'clock for a week for being out three nights running after twelve, which was rather unfair as it was a good many years ago and he wouldn't have stayed out after twelve now because of what his wife would say. And the judge didn't half like it, and he told the jury not to take any notice of it, but three of them were women and of course they did take notice of it, and when they were told that Mrs. Titubate had tried to get Mr. Titubate to agree to a private divorce and he wouldn't because he loved her their sympathies were all with Mr. Titubate, and as the rest of the jury were men they were naturally on his side and they all agreed in a verdict of Not Guilty.

Well the judge really wasn't sorry for that because his wife had told him that he wasn't to divorce more people than he was obliged to so as to uphold marriage as an institution, and he said now can't you two people make it up together? I have been favourably impressed with Mr. Titubate and am thinking of putting him up for my own golf club. I can quite understand Mrs. Titubate wanting a change after ten years, as my experience in this court goes to show that a lot of people do, it is human nature. But what I would put to her is would she be likely to do any better?

Well, Mrs. Titubate had become tired of living with her mother, Mrs. Humid, who was poor and stingy and liked quarrelling. So she was quite glad to take the judge's advice and go back to Mr. Titubate. And he was so pleased to have her back that she found she did rather love him after all. And the judge asked them both to go and have dinner at his house, and his wife whose name was Lady Crumble took a fancy to Mrs. Titubate and advised her how to slim.

A. M.

A beautiful brunette actress has arrived back in America from England with hair of a different colour. Absence makes the hair grow blonder. (29.7.31.)

Outposts of Empire

OUTPOSTS OF EMPIRE

THE GLADIATOR

We of the Mess at Ziggum are feeling below the weather to-night. Costegan is going home on leave. Costegan is a good chap and leaves a gap; but he is taking Lenin with him, and Lenin is irreplaceable.

We asked Costegan to bring him over for a final shudder, and he fetched the cigar-box, in which Lenin, preserved to the gaze of his mourners, like his namesake in Petrograd, lies in state.

He smells strongly of formalin, and Costegan is taking him home to have him silver-mounted or something.

Lenin is a spider of terrifying aspect, with eccentric-motion jaws, very quick into top speed in his prime, with the action of a small and demented lawn-mower. He is five inches long, bald as to the head and covered elsewhere with black bristles. After a week's acquaintance his name was a foregone conclusion.

For three months he has provided buckshee cigarettes for his owner and thrills for a jaded West African Mess.

We were lingering over our coffee when he entered the mud-walled Mess-room. Garaba Kano had opened the door to bring fresh sparklet bottles from the cooler outside.

He came in from the dark garden in a hurry, making direct for the circle of light thrown on the floor by the centre lamp. His treatment of a bourgeois moth on his arrival there was startling.

Costegan caught him by dropping a napkin over him, and he was put into a cigar-box and roofed over by a sheet of glass.

His ugliness and ferocity were equal. Let a shadow pass above him, and he would throw himself into an attitude of menace, holding several legs aloft threateningly.

He did this when the Major, who was short-sighted, had him out for inspection. Peering closely at him through the glass lid, the Major quailed visibly, put the box down hastily and called for a large whisky and soda.

His methods fascinated. After a moment of Berserk savagery he would set about clearing up—swallowing wings, antennae, etc., and tidying up thoroughly.

Outposts of Empire

As a murderer he would have left no trace.

When time hung heavily in the Mess after dinner, someone generally remembered to bring Lenin out after dessert in time for a couple of moths.

He wasn't everybody's idea of table decoration, and Costegan rather overdid him. After using him as an illustration of ruthlessness in war, he let him out to demonstrate a 'whippet' tank in action, and Meagrim, the M.O., got rather huffy about it. So when Meagrim said he had a plain civilian hornet, caught that afternoon, that would put that 'whippet' tank out of action, the duel was arranged.

A tin of cigarettes was the side-bet. The hornet was dropped under the glass lid from a shaving-soap tin and sailed round the cigar-box with the noise of an aeroplane. Making a safe descent upon Lenin's back, he took off again hastily, pursued from beneath by Lenin.

Four circuits of the box found the hornet in Lenin's arms, pushing a piston-like sting into Lenin's body with mechanical regularity. Hardly bothering to change position, Lenin ate on, the last course being the sting itself, eaten in the manner of a stick of celery.

Meagrim could not leave it at that, so when Glover said there was an armoured beetle of enormous dimensions, with sickle jaws, living in a hole by the side of the tennis-court, half the Mess went over with hurricane-lamps and dug him out.

Betting became general. Some of us backed Lenin as being in training, but the beetle was armour-plated all over and fairly hummed with temper, so odds were fairly level.

Dropped on the bottom of the cigar-box, the beetle began a blind lumbering run that was arrested by Lenin. Tripping him up with two or three legs he tried to hold him down with the others. This failing, he bit him in the face, which must have been like biting a gas-oven as far as protection went.

Sizzling with rage, the sickle jaws of the beetle closed on Lenin's, making them more eccentric.

Then, locked in a firm embrace, Lenin found the heel of Achilles in the thorax of the beetle and ended the fight.

Costegan collected his bets—about a dozen tins of cigarettes—

Outposts of Empire

and issued a general challenge. He drew the colour-line at scorpions, otherwise he welcomed all comers at 4 x 2 x 1 inches. (Richards the Sapper simplified this to eight cubic inches.)

Meagrim then and there bet him fifty cigars that he would find something to beat him, and next morning made an ally of the garden-boy. They were found together on hands and knees among some railway-sleepers, Meagrim, dental forceps in hand, holding something gingerly.

The fight was fixed for the following Saturday. Meagrim refused to state the exact type of gladiator he was employing, but said he could make the size-limit.

Of course it leaked out. Costegan said Meagrim's insect wouldn't have a leg to stand on, and Meagrim, with the air of Mr. Jeff Dickson announcing Carnera, said he would have a hundred.

The centipede was duly handed round in a salad-bowl for his backers' inspection. Armed with jaws in front and what looked like a sting behind, it tipped the tape at seven inches. But it had the wrong temperament. Methodical and painstaking in training, it lacked 'devil'.

Our black Mess-staff stated that it was 'plenty bad t'ing, too much', which was taken as inside information and caused heavy backing.

The fight began with Lenin side-stepping and much retracing of steps by the centipede. Lenin clearly did not know at which end to begin. However, he created two open flanks by biting through the centipede in the middle. The latter's efforts became disjointed in consequence and Lenin was left trying hard to obliterate the evidence of the fight in his usual manner.

His last fight was with Costegan, who intends to have him set up for the ancestral home. Costegan was armed with a camel-hair brush dipped in formalin, which Lenin attacked furiously until choked by bitten-off hairs and preservative.

We shall miss him, but certainly the Mess is less creepy and the Major takes a cigar without apprehension again.

T. R. H.

Pounds, Proverbs and Pence

'What would the modern seaside girl be like without her beach pyjamas?' asks a daily paper. Ought we to answer? (12.8.31.)

POUNDS, PROVERBS AND PENCE

Proverbs are misleading phrases coined by meddlesome and pedantic bullies for the purpose of imposing their own views upon a slogan-intoxicated populace. If you take any false thesis and pour it into the mould of a catchy rhythm, nine people out of ten will be bamboozled into believing it. That is why poets and politicians are the most dangerous people in the world. I am not going to wade through all the proverbs I know in order to prove this, because a greater than I has recently carried out an extensive showing-up of them in a widely read (though, apart from his column, unreadable) daily paper. But there is one in particular which at the present time is being constantly and sententiously quoted and which I feel it would be in the public interest to debunk still more ruthlessly. I refer, of course, to '*Take care of the pence. . .*'

This, ladies and gentlemen, is a thumping lie, or at best an exceedingly mischievous half-truth. For even a single pound does not begin to take care of itself until you have laboriously taken care of no fewer than two hundred and forty pence; and the man who plans his economies on these lines is in danger of self-deception and subsequent disappointment. He writes a postcard instead of a letter; sends round a note by hand instead of telephoning; gives up that little punnet of cream at breakfast and walks the last three blocks to avoid paying the extra bus-fare. Then he sits back in his armchair, mutters to himself once again that reassuring but fallacious jingle, and thinks lovingly of his nice docile pounds, like biddable children, washing their own faces, brushing their own hair and tucking themselves up in bed at night. Whereas in point of fact he has saved exactly sixpence-halfpenny, and his pounds are still running out into the street, falling down and grazing their knees in puddles, picking up rude words from bad companions and getting into all

Pounds, Proverbs and Pence

manner of mischief—as far, in short, from being able to look after themselves as ever they were before.

Consider, I implore you, how far more enviable is the state of that man who has the sense to eschew shibboleths—I write, you observe, like an Election manifesto, so as to sound more topical and arresting—to eschew shibboleths and send that proverb packing. Or better still, to turn it upside down and inside out. Take care of a pound and beyond any possible doubt two hundred and forty nice little round pennies will come trotting obediently up with well-scrubbed faces and clean pinafores, as good as g—I mean as good as copper. Besides it is much less trouble to look after one big thing than a lot of small ones. Who, if given the choice, would not prefer to be put in charge of one good-sized cart-horse rather than twenty Yorkshire terriers or two-hundred-and-forty white mice?

Moreover, economising in pounds is a good deal more fun than economising in pence. The things which cost pounds are large dull things, like parlourmaids and refrigerators and club subscriptions, whereas the things which cost pence are the things that make life worth living, like apples and cigarettes and muffins and flowers and the weekly papers.

This point of view, you may say, is bad luck on the parlourmaids, the club-runners and the refrigerator-mongers; but on the other hand it is lovely for the greengrocers and the tobacconists and the muffin-men and the flower-women and the journalists. Life is like that. And anyway they are all mixed up—our parlourmaid's father is a greengrocer, and several journalists I know sell refrigerators and vacuum-cleaners on the side: so it's as broad as it's long, or, in other words, fair and square.

Finally, by looking after the pounds instead of the pence you will forfeit less of the world's esteem and affection; for if people see you opening your own front door they say that you are a brave little woman; but if you have no cigarettes to offer them they say that you are either panic-stricken or stingy.

So, having proved to our joint satisfaction (as speech-makers always say when they have succeeded in convincing themselves and their audience has not actually thrown any brickbats) that that

Pounds, Proverbs and Pence

proverb is All My Eye, let us wend our several ways and concentrate our energies upon the problem of looking after those pounds. How long, I wonder, before the flowers and the muffins have to go too, after all?

J. S. (Jan).

NATURAL HISTORY NOTES

CREATURES OF THE DEEP

THE ANCHOVY.—Easily the most salt thing in the sea. Begins life in the Mediterranean and ends it under peculiarly distressing circumstances all over the world.

THE DOLPHIN.—A popular name for public-houses.

THE WHALE.—Surely you all know about this? The Whale has cavernous jaws and is composed largely of blubber. The stomach is very capacious though the gullet is small; an interesting illustration of an old adage, 'The little maw, and how much it is!' The Common or Right Whale abounds to a great height in the North Atlantic, and so offers an easy mark to the skilled harpooner. It may be of interest in passing to describe the manner in which these monsters are hunted to their death. In the bows of the whaler is a small and inexpensive gun charged with grape-nut and loaded with a sharp spear or harpoon (by asyndeton from the Eskimo *He nappoo*—i.e. 'She blows'). When the quarry has been sighted and brought within range the gun is fired and the stricken creature, obeying the dimly understood promptings of its own nature, makes off at a great speed due south. Arrived at the warmer waters of the Gulf Stream, it breaks into a profuse perspiration, which is the signal for the cry, 'There she puffs and blows!' to be raised on board the pursuing vessel. Finally the temperature of the surrounding sea causes the poor animal to expand and rise to the surface (Boyle's Law), where it is lassoed, drawn up on deck and throttled. The whole business is slightly nauseating. Besides the Right Whale we must notice Rorquals, Narwhals, Killers, Spouters, Pinheads and the Shabby Caribbean. Some are bigger than others; others not so big—biggest of all, perhaps, the Cachalot, the prince of whales. Whales lay no eggs.

Natural History Notes

THE LING.—See under COD.

THE COD.—See under CODLING.

THE CODLING.—A small effeminate cod of little intrinsic worth, but a favourite food of *Piscis hyperborealis* (the North Sea Hake).

THE ARQUEBUS.—Regarded with grave suspicion by sailors, as it has the reputation of being ill-omened. Everyone knows the famous couplet:

*'To make it wuss, an Arquebus
About his neck was hung.'*

which has been variously explained.

THE SPRAT.—A jejune fish.

THE WHITING.—An example to us all. This fish can make both ends meet. Why not you?

THE BLUE-NOSED OR BOTTLE SHARK.—A poor fish which is scarcely ever seen near the surface, preferring to remain half-seas under. Like the Hammer-Toed Shark, it has the mouth on the under side to prevent water getting in. 'Nature's loving care for her creatures extends even to the most grotesque, the most fantastic, among them.'—*Brock*. The bark of the Dog-fish, one of the smaller sharks, resembles that of the holm-oak.

THE OCTOPUS.—Bergmann describes a thrilling encounter with one of these denizens (if the term be permitted) of the deep. While pearl-diving off the coast of Cochin-China he was horrified to find himself gripped below the knee by the suckers or tabernacles of a giant octopus. He did not lose his presence of mind even in the face of this emergency, but at once drew and opened the mother-of-pearl penknife, without which he never dived, and hacked furiously at the liana-like feelers that shackled him. As well might he try to break down the Forth Bridge with a poker (a feat never yet attempted) as hope to sever those tough arms with so puny (albeit valuable) a weapon. It was just (you will have guessed) as he was abandoning all hope that there was a sudden swirl in the water above him, the flash of a long lithe body that seemed to hurl itself straight at his opponent, and an instant lessening of the terrible constriction

Natural History Notes

about his lower limbs. Followed the sound, audible even beneath the water, of rending flesh and snapping tendon, and he was free. 'It was only as he was making off that I recognised my liberator,' Bergmann relates. 'He was without a doubt that self-same swordfish I had befriended many years before come to me, like the lion of Damocles, in my hour of need. It was in the spring of 1869 that I found him stranded on the beach at Brighton and took him in the nick of time to the Aquarium. Here he soon became, by virtue of his pretty ways and gentle disposition, a prime favourite with the children. Eventually he hacked his way out and got safely away to sea. But he never forgot, fortunately for me as it proved, the strange being who once took pity on his plight.'

The whole story stands self-convicted as a tissue of lies. Every schoolboy knows that there are no pearls in the Cochin-China seas; and swordfish at Brighton are so rare as to be practically non-existent.

But what of the CUTTLE-FISH, better known to some as the SQUIB? Perhaps this is a subject best left alone:

*'Were it not better done as others use,
To strictly meditate the thankless Mews,
Than fly to others that we know not of?'*

I think it were.

THE SEA-MEW (*Felis ingrata*).—The fiercest and most morose of the Catfish. Known to mariners as the Dudgeon. The only useful service it performs is to prey on its own kind. 'Truly the ways of nature are inscrutable.'—*Brock*.

THE SEA ELEPHANT.—A common sight at any seaside resort during the summer months.

THE LOBSTER.—Makes excellent polonaise. In the natural state the lobster is black or some similar colour, only turning red under stress of great emotion.

THE SEA KALE.—A whiskered monster of eccentric habits.

THE TUNNEY.—I cannot resist telling again the story of Domitian and the tunney. A very large specimen of this fine fish had been sent

Natural History Notes

to the Emperor and he had assembled his Ministers to advise him on the serious matter of its preparation for the table, when to their alarm and astonishment the fish suddenly exclaimed, '*Moribunduste saluto,*' or more simply, 'In spite of my present anæmic condition—greetings.' Domitian promptly stunned it with a blow of the imperial fasces, opened its stomach and discovered therein a ring belonging to Polycrates of Samos. But that is another story.

THE BASS (*by special request*).

H. F. E.

Efforts to popularise the British Museum have so far been unsuccessful. Have they tried labelling it 'For Adults Only'? (26.8.31.)

WHAT IS MAN?

('The chemical constituents of a man's body are,' etc., etc. 'The whole, at present prices, could be bought for five shillings.'—*A recent Lecture.*)

O Man, how great you are,
How fair in form and limb;
The last how muscular,
The first (with luck) how slim;
How wondrously designed
To suit all tastes; and what
Supremacy of mind——

Five bob the lot!
This is the way a scientific gent
Evaluates your chemical content.

A man of slender habit (as my reader is, I hope)
Has fats enough for seven bars of common household soap;
Lead for nine thousand pencils from his carbon might be wrought;
His salts would yield a matutinal dose (a solemn thought);

What is Man?

*In lime he'd wash a hen-coop, and in phosphorus provide
(O brain!) two thousand match-heads, which is not a source of pride;
A nail exhausts his iron, and one has to add to these
A modicum of sulphur to relieve a dog of fleas.*

*The rest, we learn, is water. All the rest
Mere ordinary water. Well, I'm blest.*

*O man, how poor you are,
How paltry and how cheap;
This is a nasty jar;
This is a trifle steep;
Lord of the listening earth,
Nature's unrivalled job,
Is this your boasted worth,
The lot—five bob?*

*Recall with shame the household soap; ponder the homely brad;
Muse on the dose of morning salts; the pencils aren't so bad;
Think of the coop, the matches (brain); and, when you've worked these
round,
With due abasement meditate the flea-infested hound.*

*And yet, what finally puts on the lid
Is that five bob. They might have said a quid.*
MAJOR K. (*Dum-Dum*).

At a rehearsal of a new revue, a paper tells us, the stalls were crowded. Apparently the authors had looked in to see how the show was coming along. (10.2.32.)

An Honest Man

AN HONEST MAN

*He stopped me in the street and said
His wife was lying ill in bed,
The humble roof above her head
Was in immediate danger
Due to his having paid no rent;
And, as his money all was spent,
He mentioned this predicament
To me, a perfect stranger.*

*He begged a loan. A bitter stroke,
He owned, for he was proud, though broke;
But something in my visage spoke
Of one whose heart might soften;
He had some money coming in,
When promptly he'd return the tin;
A yarn that seemed a trifle thin;
I had been had so often.*

*And yet my heart-strings gave a tug,
And, though the world might call me mug,
I 'parted' with a casual shrug;
He took the offering coolly
And even, flushed with his success,
Made careful note of my address
Where in a week, he said, or less,
He would requite me duly.*

*When I got home I said, 'My lad,
You are an idiot; you've been had;
No doubt the fellow thought you mad,
You and that face he'd spotted.'
I wondered if the world had seen
A juggins so intensely green
And why on earth I'd ever been
So weak and so besotted.*

An Honest Man

*That was a week ago. To-day
He came, an honest man, to pay
His debt, and begged the maid to say
He'd have been done without it;
She, thinking this was not at all
Our customary kind of call,
Came up and left him in the hall,
To ask me what about it.*

*'Bless him,' I cried, and up I sprang;
'Now let the sceptic world go hang,
The cynic perish with a bang
In his own idle folly.'
And down I bolted to restore
My gift, but he had 'gone before',
And with him passed for evermore
Two salvers and a brolly.*

MAJOR K. (*Dum-Dum*).

'SPEECH, SPEECH!'

To-night a play of mine is being produced by the Steeple Thatchby Amateur Dramatic Society, and now, at the last moment, I am feeling acutely nervous; not, of course, about the play, but about the little ceremony which must inevitably follow the fall of the curtain. Successful playwrights must make speeches. When, amid tumultuous cries of 'Author! Author!' I step before, under or through the curtain—according to whether the curtain has stuck at the moment—what shall I say? Shall I be modest, graceful or witty? Shall I prepare a thoughtful address on the future of the drama? Or shall I, trusting that something may occur to me on the spur of the moment, leave it to chance?

This speech I am going to make is a more difficult matter than you might suppose. When you make a speech after a West End production the rules are clearly laid down. After standing for three

‘Speech, Speech!’

hours in the wings and an agony of nervous tension you stagger blindly on to the stage and in a voice moist with gratitude thank the audience, the actors, the producer, the stage-manager, the assistant stage-manager, the call-boy and (why not?) the fireman for all their wonderful kindness to you. There is but one alternative. If you are cunning you may persuade the manager to go on and say that Sir James is not in the house; but you can only do that if you are an old hand. Anyhow, the point is that in London you at least know where you are. In Steeple Thatchby, on the other hand, where are you?

Firstly, you have to write your play. It may be argued that there is nothing in that. In these islands to-day there are some forty-two million drawers in each of which reposes a play, or, if not a play, at least one thumping First Act and an interesting synopsis. Anybody, we are agreed, can write a play; but the Steeple Thatchby playwright must express himself in a definite medium. He must adapt his drama to suit the characters and *milieu* at his disposal. I do not complain of this. Shakespeare, as we are aware, produced immortal works of genius under a similar handicap, though I must say I should like to know how he would have fitted *Hamlet* with (a) a hero (our baker) who stutters, (b) a villain (our signalman) who can only get off duty for rehearsals in the middle of the night, and (c) a general utility man (Ephraim Pepperwort) who plays the cornet and has a wooden leg. Our stock scenery, which consists of two back-drops representing respectively Clacton Pier and the Great Wall of China, also calls for a certain ingenuity in setting. Shakespeare, I repeat, would have knocked up a rattling fine play from these materials, but then Shakespeare, as even Mr. James Agate admits, was *clever*.

The author's speech, however, remains the chief difficulty. The usual gambits are closed to me. I cannot in all modesty declaim my passionate gratitude towards the producer, the stage-manager, the orchestra, the call-boy and the Noises-OFF, because, you see, I am (and shall have been) the producer, the stage-manager, the orchestra, the call-boy and the noises-OFF. Nor can I reasonably cause it to be announced that I am not in the house. After all, the entire audience will have seen me taking tickets at the door. It will have heard me playing the Overture from ‘Zampa’ on the Parish Room piano at

‘Speech, Speech!’

the interval. It will have seen me, or portions of me frenziedly holding up the Great Wall of China when it falls down (as it will fall down) in Act III. No, I cannot pretend that I am not in the house.

I must of course thank the players and the audience. I can, after the manner of a well-known London actress-manageress, murmur, ‘Thank you, thank you, thank you! You have been *jerst wernderful!*’ But what then? There should be more to it than that. The speeches of rising dramatists should be made of sterner stuff. I must say a few well-chosen words on the dramatic unities, or some tendencies of the modern theatre or Shakespeare the Man. I must. . . . Or would it not be better after all to trust to the inspiration of the moment? Yes, I will leave it to chance.

Stop Press.—A terrible thing has happened. The play? Oh, the play as a play was successful enough; but afterwards. . . . I feel my position keenly. It all comes of leaving things to chance. I had omitted the vital precaution of arranging for a confederate in the audience to shout ‘Author!’

A. A. T.

THE HONOURS LIST

AN INDIAN APPLICATION

As he proudly narrates in the correspondence to which I have already referred, my old bearer Fusaldar is now engaged in business as a ‘Cheap John Merchant’. The idea of his name appearing in the Honours List was probably suggested to him by some of his friends in the bazaar, but the brilliant conception of the anticipatory newspaper paragraph is characteristically his own. The old man’s queer communication, which has just come to hand, runs as follows:

‘For some time past I am making deep cogitation over matters of considerable importance. Now I am coming to final decision of applying for name appearing on Honours List. Therefore I am humbly request of Master will send some good wording of grand petition for me with particulars as follows:

‘First part of career I am having long and honourable service of

The Honours List

bearer of British Officer Sahib. Many box I am having choke full of chit of recommending of all my many Masters, all of which, alas, is dead and gone for various reasons, except my last good Master which I am sending these few lines, and which has not so far, thank goodness, followed unfortunate majority. I am serve with Officer Sahib from Kabul to Kandahar when the great Roberts Sahib is make his famous name. I am in the Tirah and the Dargai and many other battle too numerous to mention. My feet is sore with the Khyber Pass. Many time death is only passing me with skin of teeth. One time rogue Alfridi Wallah is chasing me and I am running with soup for my then Master in one hand and small whisky peg in the next, and am only finding safety with inches to spare, and still some soup and whisky left over for delivery to Master. Within many box aforesaid is to be read true story of such warlike career of me, and is open for inspection.

'From his own lips Master will bear witness for me of long years we are being together. I am reminding Master of one time he is sick with terrific fever. There is fearful temperature and Master is raving for me of medicine is no good and I must send for Fire Brigade to put him out. But I am braving wrath of Master and am carry on with bottle with happy result of life is spared.

'Once more, there is time when Master is late for make it ready for dinner at Flagstaff House and there is horrible discovery of no clean shirt. On that occasion Master is throwing boot at me. But I am doing successful dodge of flying boot and am saving Master of awful responsibility of giving me maybe fatal blow.

'All aforesaid item, and many other not mentioned, making sum total of great deserving for me of Honours List.

'But crowning act of me for clinching bargain is five six year ago I am retiring from bearer business and turning into Cheap John Shop. Since becoming Cheap John Merchant I am continually cementing chain of Empire with selling all sort and condition of goods as lowest rates for poor man, and always I am keeping British Goods in very forefront of all other, though many time all is not beer and skittle. Master must make big noise in petition of said part of career.

The Honours List

'Now with utmost confidence I am letting cat out of bag for benefit of Master with information of great secret preparation going on in my business. Babu is working, tailor fella is working, painter is working. One fine day soon population is to wake up to find all window of my shop decorated with red white and blue ribbon, and there famous secret will be revealed at last with innumerable notice of immense letters, "Never Setting Sun of Empire Pyjamas". Crowning act of piece will be my son Nana making slow to and fro in front of shop with notice printed all over the breast, "I am happy man wearing Never Setting Sun Empire Pyjamas".

'Now this is matter of utmost urgency and am humbly praying Master will send cable message for me. If probable successful result of petition Master will send word "Good". Sad event of petition no blooming use, Master will send word "Bad". Good reply coming I am of intention getting Babu friend of me preparing newspaper story same like: "Our famous Cheap John Fusaldar Kkan is shortly of expectation of name appearing on Honours List for honourable military service and for recent good action of introducing celebrated line of goods of Never Setting Sun of Empire Pyjamas".

'With heart in mouth I am now waiting cable message of Master.'

With a sad heart I have cabled, 'Bad'.

D. C.

When a door-key is hung outside a house in Sweden it is a sign that the family is not at home. If this is done in England it is a sign that the family is not all there. (24.2.32.)

THE DERBY

NOTE.—*It is sincerely to be hoped that all the animals mentioned below are as fictitious as they are meant to be.*

The approach of the classic event at Epsom has set all the world by the ears. Not only the racing fraternity, but every Englishman with

The Derby

a trace of sporting blood in his veins, is asking what will win. Who is fated to be the proudest man in England, in that never-to-be-forgotten moment when he leads his victorious horse to the judge's box to receive the Blue Ribbon of the Turf? No one can say. The glorious element of uncertainty enters into this no less than into other sporting events, and the most one can do is to attempt to estimate the chances of the various contestants and then proceed to draw one's own conclusions.

So much has already been written on the form of the leading horses that I do not propose to deal with them here, but to confine myself to some, I hope, pertinent remarks on a few of the less well-known entries. Who knows but that what not—not that what—what not that—— Who knows? It may be, such is the glorious uncertainty of the turf (as I seem to have said before), that the winner will be found among their number.

AKBAR. A promising colt with nice fetlocks and a slight list to port, like its owner. Given fair play and a following wind it might spring a surprise. Goes better over grass than on cinders, but his form on asphalt has to be seen to be believed.

SWEET WILLIAM. Subject to fits and starts. Everything depends on which he has on the great day; if it's fits he won't start; if he starts he won't win; but worth backing for a place on the chance of all the other horses, bar two, falling dead in their tracks.

SMILING THROUGH. Quite the ugliest animal that ever won the City and Suburban; but, as any racing man will tell you, the Derby is not won by good looks, and this horse seems to me to have a reasonable chance of success if his trainer can only cure his (the horse's) habit of coughing in his (the horse's) stable.¹

JOE. The only cart-horse entered.

SLINGO. Rather full in the barrel and a trifle long in the withers for a thoroughbred, but a real trier, and ran a nice race at Stoke Poges over the old course last year, finishing second to Arrowroot, who twisted his hocks a mile from home. Two ran.

GOODNIGHT WATCHMAN. (*to be sung standing*) Lost a leg in the

¹ It cannot be too strongly emphasised that he (the trainer) is himself free from any bronchial trouble.

The Derby

War but still full of running. This horse, which will be thirty-three years old at the end of this month, was entered under the new Jockey Club rule by which any horse attaining the age of thirty is deemed to be dead and may begin counting all over again. His participation in the race will set up a new record, though in 1923 an animal of great age was entered as a yearling after having its face lifted. The deception was not discovered till just before the start, when its teeth fell out in the paddock.

TARPIN. A very nice horse, by Struwwelpeter out of Daisybird out of Tune out of Sight out of Mind—and now unfortunately out of the running by pure bad luck.

WATER-MELON. Won in a cantaloup from a large field in the Covent Garden Selling Plate, but was shortly afterwards suspended for a breach of etiquette at Plumtree.

MARQUIS. Bought originally at 35s. for trade purposes by Mr. Rudolph Emsworthy, an East Ham grocer, this horse, largely through being accusomed to wearing blinkers, has never looked back and is widely fancied as a long-odds chance. Mr. Emsworthy proposes to ride the mount himself in full grocer's kit to give it confidence.

PONTO. It is possible to get a line on this horse through Crackers, whom he beat by a snaffle at Ipswich. The son of Tarraconna had previously beaten his half-brother, Sergeant Slack, who beat Woolacombe, who beat Dumb Crambo, who beat the uncle of Flying Fox,¹ who beat Shotover, who beat Eglington, who beat his own grandfather, who beat his wife's sister's second cousin, who just beat Bolsover, the horse that gave this year's favourite such a smack in the eye at Fratton in the Southsea Stakes. But form in racing is never quite reliable, and Ponto can hardly be considered as more than a likely outsider. I shall back him for a place.

PLUNKET. Almost as fast backwards as forwards. A small safety bet each way should provide for any contingency.

KING ARTHUR (4-6-0).² A dark horse. They are saying nice

¹ By a second marriage.

² The figures in brackets refer to the placing of the horse in its last three races, not to the number and disposition of its wheels.

The Derby

things about him in the East End and as far west as Kensington and Hammersmith, but Chiswick, Egham, Staines and other centres are inclined to be sceptical. No news to hand from Surbiton.

SACKBUT. An uncertain quantity. Here are the facts. At the age of eight months he covered a mile (four up) in the excellent time of 2 mins. 4 secs. This was at a garden fête, and the whole thing was done in a spirit of pure fun and was quite unpremeditated. He has not run since owing to croup, and it remains to be seen whether he will reproduce his early form in serious competition. I hear his owner is offering an apple a day to a safety-pin that he will be in the first four, which looks significant.

TED MATHERS (Portsmouth). A probable runner and one who ought to be watched. His wonderful performance at the Durlington Point-to-Point, when he ran right away from the field and, though severely handicapped by obstacles, covered the five furlongs to the station in record time, will not be readily forgotten. He was carrying a lot of money, and a large crowd of backers followed him home with the utmost enthusiasm.

H. F. E.

'BY ANY NAME . . .'

'The *anaemias* are wonderful,' I said.

My companion gave me a doubtful glance but said nothing. We walked on beside the herbaceous border. 'And those *arthritis*,' I said, pointing to a cluster of scarlet blooms. 'Always so divine at this time of the year.'

Again the dubious glance, and again no utterance except an appreciative 'Um'. I came to the conclusion that the young lady knew no more about flowers than I do.

We joined the group of guests in front of us, and I drew attention to the *erysipelas*. All admired the flowers but none questioned their name. Our hostess had been called into the house by the telephone, and I formed the opinion that all her guests were miserable Cockney like myself.

And they were all pretending.

‘By any Name . . .’

Rather a grand moment.

You know that somewhat grisly half-hour before lunch on Sunday in the country. Those who have been to church feel bound to talk about it; and those who have spent the morning reading the Sunday papers in quiet corners feel bound to put them down and make some pretence of sociability. Lunch seems years away. Lunch is at some terribly fashionable hour just before tea. One wanders about looking at the flowers, or the clipped yew, or the Long Field, or the new cow, or the incinerator, or the tomato-frames. One returns exhausted to the herbaceous border; there is still not a whisper about lunch. Possibly it has been postponed a little because an editor is dashing down to this meal from London. And the only thing to do is to walk about the garden and talk about the flowers.

Generally the hostess leads the way, talking brightly about the flowers, explaining how beautiful the what-nots were last week before I came, and how lovely the what-is-its will be next week when I have gone. I must have some sinister influence on vegetation, for I find that the best plants resolutely decline to flower when I am there.

Only the flowers with difficult names perform during my week-ends; and I can never remember their names. Whenever I am attracted by a bloom I have to say, ‘What is that?’ Generally it has a name like *salpiglossis*. And the next year, when I visit that house again, I again have to ask what the name of the *salpiglossis* is. As a rule it is still called *salpiglossis*; but I suspect some hostesses of changing the names of their flowers from year to year. For there have been times when I could have betted on *salpiglossis* and the wretched growth has turned out to be *penstemons*. I have even murmured confidently, ‘Your *salpiglossis* are fine this year’; and it is extremely humiliating to hear my hostess cock her eyebrow, so to speak, and reply, ‘Oh, yes; you mean the *penstemons*’.

She does not realise that we townsmen are severely handicapped in the remembering of floral names. Garden flowers should have more simple titles; and no flower must ever again be called *salpiglossis*, *penstemon*, or *what-is-it-aria pendens*.

Call me hypersensitive if you will, but for years this business has

‘By any Name . . .’

wrecked my infrequent week-ends in the Shires. I have suffered agonies beside the herbaceous borders of my friends; I have felt inferior and backward; and I have always begun Sunday lunch in the country with indigestion.

And then, last year, light came to me. From time to time there is a flower in my own little London garden. We had a flower last year. And one day I was strolling about the estate (it is twenty feet wide) with a visitor, when he said, ‘What is that flower?’ I had not the faintest idea. No one had ever expressed an interest in our flower before, and the experience was pleasing. ‘Scrofula,’ I answered idly; and the man was perfectly satisfied (he lived in Holborn).

Brooding over our flower when he had gone, it occurred to me that his satisfaction was easily explained; for nearly all flowers do sound like something in the *Medical Dictionary*. You would not be surprised if I said to you, ‘Poor old Thompson has come back from the Gold Coast. He’s suffering from *salpiglossis*’. It is a perfectly convincing tropical disease. The commoner flowers too—‘Lady Flake is down with *wistaria* again,’ or, ‘Old Reggie’s ill. A bad attack of *tulip*’.

Anyway, this is my system. As I know more diseases and medicines than flowers I have renamed the flowers. And now that half-hour before lunch has no terrors for me (unless I am caught in conversation with my hostess). On this occasion when we had duly admired the *erysipelas*, I said with enthusiasm, ‘My dear, do look! The *diabetes* are out’. Then I turned towards the house and remarked with an air of culture, ‘I always think the *climbing vertigo* is rather *vulgar* in bloom, don’t you?’ And we all gazed with some distaste at an extremely common creeper, the name of which (*ex hypothesi*) I cannot tell you.

Then I wandered on with the young lady and we goggled at the *double pneumonias*. She agreed that they had a much more pleasing shade than the single variety. She liked too the *yellow quinsy* and that charming little orchid which I call *housemaid’s knee*. I showed her the *peritonitis Britannica*, the *blue diphtherias* and the delicate *pink-eye*. We stood a long time smelling the *uvulas*, then in full bloom. I think the girl enjoyed herself, and I know that I did.

‘By any Name . . .’

I have now renamed nearly all the garden flowers of these islands; and I hope that my work will prove a boon to the townsfolk who, once my system is adopted, will be able to start the week-end on equal terms with the country folk. I want to make it clear that there is nothing capricious about my nomenclature—that is to say, the same flowers are always *anæmias* to me. I mean, I do not call one flower the *anæmia* at Mrs. A’s and another flower at Mrs. B’s. Anyone, therefore, who has week-ended with me may be sure that he has the official names; and by degrees I hope to spread my system throughout the countryside (will really *rich* hostesses please note?). I cannot, alas! conduct a correspondence course or tell you directly what is the new name, for instance, of *salpiglossis*, because I have again forgotten which the *salpiglossis* is. But an illustrated booklet will shortly appear in which the pictures should make all things clear.

I hope, by the way, that nobody will take this as a joke and begin rechristening the flowers at random. For if people go talking about the *prorrhœas* when they mean what I call the *purple asphyxia*, the whole flower-world will be thrown into a ghastly muddle.

A. P. H.

As we go to Press, we learn that the *Daily Mail* cuckoo and the *Daily Express* cuckoo are reported from Africa to be flying neck-and-neck in their race to be first in this country. (13.4.32.)

MORE FROM THE HAWTHORNS

‘The Hawthorns’ have just held their annual Bridge Tournament and, as I had anticipated, I have been inundated with correspondence relating to it. From amongst the mass of problems discussed I unhesitatingly select the following hand as most worthy of comment.

My correspondent states that the awkward position in which he found himself would never have arisen but for the fact that different

More from the Hawthorns

packs of cards are often very similar in colour, that new ones are never used until the Final, that the Club admits the children of members, and that its amenities are not confined to the playing of bridge.

The Tournament opened in a somewhat sensational manner, the following remarkable first hand being dealt at my correspondent's table:

A (dealer) held: Spades, Ace; Hearts, Ace, Jack, 8, 5, 6; Diamonds, Ace, King, Queen, 2; and Clubs, Ace, King, Queen, Jack.

X (on A's left) held: Spades, 9, 7, 6, 2; Hearts, King, Queen, 7; Diamonds, 10, 9, 6; and Clubs, 5, 4, 3.

B (A's partner) held: Spades, Ace, King, Queen, Jack; Hearts, 4, 3, 2; Diamonds, 5, 4, 3; and Clubs, 10, 9, 8.

Y (X's partner) held: Spades, 10, 8, 5, 4, 3; Hearts, 10, 9; Diamonds, Jack, 8, 7; and Clubs, 7, 6, 2.

A (my correspondent) having dealt and observed four Aces in his hand, immediately bid a No Trump; X passed; B bid Two Spades; Y passed; and A, without bothering to look at his hand again, bid a Little Slam in No Trumps. There was no further bid; B's remarks not constituting a call.

X led off with 2 of Spades. A says that, on Dummy's hand going down, his first instinct was to draw attention to the extraordinary fact that both he and Dummy held the Ace of Spades, which, as he says, was most unusual. However, on second thoughts and after counting his cards and discovering that he had fourteen, he decided to carry on. So, closing up his cards quickly, he leant forward as if to examine Dummy more closely, at the same time thrusting his hands well under the table, his object being, of course, to get rid of his superfluous card, the Ace of Spades, by flicking it on the floor.

Having carried out this manœuvre, he played the Ace of Spades from Dummy and, leaning back in his chair, opened his hand to see what to discard.

'To my utter consternation', he says, 'I made the appalling discovery that I still possessed the Ace of Spades, having in my eagerness to get rid of the extra card, thrown away a wrong one; and to make matters worse I did not know what card I had thrown.'

More from the Hawthorns

To follow suit was of course out of the question, so he discarded the 5 of Hearts.

By this time, he continues, he thought he saw a Little Slam all right, but to claim it there and then would have been running the unnecessary risk of having to expose his hand with Dummy's Ace of Spades still far too fresh in everyone's mind. So, after clearing his throat and saying, 'Well, here goes!' he started to play out his cards, hoping that by careful deduction and keeping his own Ace of Spades till the end he would be able to say either 'The last is mine,' or, 'I will give you a Spade' (Heart, Diamond or Club), according to circumstances), while throwing the Ace of Spades face downwards on the table or retaining it in his hand.

All went well until just before the last round, when he noticed a card lying face downwards on the floor by Y's feet. 'Naturally presuming', he says, 'that this was the card I had dropped and having realised by then that it must be a Heart of sorts, I determined to retrieve it and perhaps even obtain a Grand Slam.' It appears that he then dropped his cigarette under the table and plunged almost simultaneously after it, and, whilst retrieving the cigarette with one hand, exchanged the Ace of Spades for the card on the floor with the other.

Thereupon, without looking at it, he flicked it on to the table saying playfully to X, 'Have you a Heart to beat that?'

'Imagine my horror', he goes on to say, 'when I realised that the card I had played was Mr. Bung the Brewer, apparently a souvenir of the children's party held in the Clubhouse that afternoon.'

For perhaps a minute, A says, there was complete silence, and then Y, who, it seems, always possesses an ill-timed sense of humour, said, 'Yes, he probably can beat that if he produces Mrs. Bung.' X, however, who is a bachelor and a stickler for the rules, looked hard at A for a moment and then looked under the table and eventually found, with Y's help, the Ace of Spades, the Knave of Hearts and Mrs. Bones. X then said that for his liking there were too many Aces in the pack. 'Not having a reputation as a humorist', says A, 'it was impossible for me to pass the whole thing off as a leg-pull. I did offer to wash the whole hand out, but X merely said he would

More from the Hawthorns

prefer to see the Committee first. The party thereupon broke up.'

A says he is now in a most invidious position through no fault of his own. Apart from the very natural objection that one can never rely upon old packs, he also complains that, although most packs of 'Happy Families' are different in texture and front view from ordinary playing-cards, the distinction in size is not sufficiently emphasised; moreover, as in his case, the card in question was lying in the shadow cast by the table and Y's legs.

Last year, he says, I gave him some useful advice on the matter of discarding (on an occasion when he was holding fourteen cards to only twelve of one of his opponents), and he now wishes me to give my opinion on this.

The lesson to be deduced from the careless discarding of the wrong card in the first instance is obvious and calls for little comment. Carelessness in discarding nearly always brings its tale of woe, as here, and I cannot press this point too strongly on readers. However; A having thrown the wrong card away, the case becomes more difficult, but upon consideration it is obvious that the Grand Slam should never have been attempted. Having obtained the Little Slam he should then have said (knowing, as he states, that the missing card was a Heart), 'I give you a Heart,' at the same time throwing his Ace of Spades face downwards amongst the tricks and muddling them all up together. His opponents would in all probability have accepted the trick, even if the missing card was the best Heart. In the unlikely event of their pointing this fact out he could say it was his mistake, but he must stand by what he said. During this interchange he should, of course, go on collecting, muddling and shuffling.

With regard to the regrettable appearance of 'Happy Family' cards in a club where bridge is played I would rather remain silent. Altogether an infelicitous hand.

J. B. C.

'Are women clubable?' asks a lady writer. Cave-men used to find them so. (11.5.32.)

The Beginner's Guide to the Organ

THE BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO THE ORGAN

The main drawback in learning to play the organ is the necessity for borrowing a whole church or cathedral every time you want to practise. It is possible, of course, to borrow a complete cinema, though this savours of selfishness and there is always the risk of pressing the wrong thing and being whirled away with the instrument into the basement for the night.

Neither is a church organ free from its peculiar embarrassments. In the case of the little country church, where the bellows are worked by manual labour, it is almost essential to have a blower, and he will cramp your style by the exercise of that particularly withering type of pity employed by the most degraded species of golf-caddie. It is very wearing, however, to try to get on without a blower. The strain of working the bellows and then rushing round to the front again to get in a note or two before the wind is exhausted does not make for that concentration which is so necessary for real progress. Very often too you tread on one of the fiercer notes as you clamber back to your seat, thus deflating the instrument immediately.

Again, if you borrow an important church, there are sightseers who mistake you for the organist and sit, until you notice them, in rapt admiration of your ten-toe exercises. The most dignified exit from such a situation is to pull out everything that will pull out and press everything that won't, execute a Jack Buchanan step-dance on the pedals and then lock up as ostentatiously as possible.

Usually I pretend to be a tuner and go round tapping the more accessible pipes with the little toffee hammer I always have with me. If the audience persists in waiting for the show to begin I approach one of them with a request for a puncture outfit, explaining that one of the instrument's lungs is slightly affected.

As to the actual playing of the king of instruments—as the gramophone catalogues so aptly term it—a book on elementary Organics will prove of far more use to the beginner than I can hope to be at present. Later, when you have made some progress by your-

The Beginner's Guide to the Organ

self, I may be able to bring my advice within the scope of your knowledge. For the present I must be content with a few definitions of the commoner features connected with the instrument and a simple explanation of the names of some of the stops.

Clarabella.—A variation in tone, often discernible by the naked ear, accidentally discovered by a Mrs. Clarabelle Entwhistle (*née* Ayscough), who dropped a hairpin into the bellows in the late 'seventies. Rather metallic.

Fugue.—A tune played by each finger in turn, then by each toe, and finally with overlapping and contra-punting, or cross-kicking.

Hymns, Accompaniment of.—Listen carefully to the choir and keep just behind. The beginner must learn not to be put off by intimidating movements on the part of the trebles known as descant.

Manual.—This is what you have been ignorantly calling the keyboard. There may be as many as five of these banks of notes. Always use the top one, so that if the hand slips you may be sure of hitting the corresponding note of one of the banks underneath. Remember that, as is not the case with the piano, the note will go on as long as pressure is maintained; therefore do not rest the feet on the manual during the sermon unless you have made quite sure that the instrument is completely de-aerated.

Nux Vomica.—A full stop if used to excess.

Ophicleide, or '*Organist's Eye*'.—An acute squint induced by the playing of passages marked 'With hands and legs crossed'.

Organ, American.—See *Organ, Nasal*.

Organ, Nasal.—A neat little contrivance entailing no outside help in blowing.

Organ, seated one day at the.—A trifle executed by Sullivan when Gilbert was not there to prevent it.

Orgy, or *Organ Recital*.—An exhibition bout given by the organist to fill up the Choir Fund, or by the B.B.C. to fill up the time.

Pedals.—The number of these that may be operated at one time depends almost entirely on the size of the feet. A delightfully full effect may be obtained by wearing skis.

Psalms, Accompaniment of.—Choose a more or less non-com-

The Beginner's Guide to the Organ

mittal note and keep pressing. The choir will do the rest if it is any good.

Spitzflöte.—A vulgar little stop.

Stopped Flute.—This may be cleaned out with an ordinary pipe-cleaner or an army pull-through.

Toccata.—Very often the first symptom of an impending *Fugue*.

Tremulant.—A neurotic defect noticeable in young and inexperienced performers.

Voluntary.—That part of a service which there is no moral compulsion to attend.

Vox Humana.—Beautifully described by Byron as—

'. . . the bubbling cry
Of some strong swimmer in his agony.'

P. A. H.

THE EXPERT TRIES IT

'Drink a glass of hot milk before going to bed,' said the young doctor briskly, 'and after getting into bed banish petty worries from the mind and try the old-fashioned plan of counting sheep coming through an open gate.'

'My own sheep?' said Farmer Gubbins.

'No, just sheep,' said the young doctor in an absent-minded tone.

That night, comforted by his hot milk and his faith in the medical profession, Farmer Gubbins got into bed, blew out the candle, tucked the sheet under his chin, closed his eyes firmly and at once set about preliminary arrangements for counting sheep, knowing that if he didn't start immediately on something definite like sheep he would begin worrying about the sunshine and the rain and the sick cow and one thing and another.

It was easy enough to imagine an open gate—picnickers and other people were for ever making a plaguy nuisance of themselves by wandering over his farm opening gates and forgetting to shut them—but unfortunately the open gate he chose to picture was the rather rotten one leading from Twenty-Acre into Ten-Acre, against

The Expert Tries It

which a good-for-nothing young varmint of a boy had carelessly backed a horse-and-cart that very day. However, remembering that he was supposed to be counting sheep, Farmer Gubbins pulled himself together and concentrated as cheerfully as possible, with his eyes tight shut, on what was left of the gate.

The first sheep that came through was a Lonk tup teg. It was as healthy a Lonk tup teg as Farmer Gubbins had ever seen, and he couldn't help letting his thoughts dwell for several minutes on Lonks in general and in particular on this uncommonly hardy young animal which was such a credit to his imagination. But, remembering that he was supposed to be *counting* sheep, he said 'One' to himself and let the Lonk tup teg pass on.

The second sheep was a Romney Marsh double-toothed gimmer, and a pretty good double-toothed gimmer as double-toothed gimmers go. Farmer Gubbins, however, resisting the temptation to think about Romney Marshes, said 'Two' to himself and let the double-toothed gimmer wander off in the wake of the Lonk tup teg.

The next sheep was a Devon Longwool gimmer hogg, followed by a Southdown aged wether, with another young Lonk tup teg romping along behind. At that point Farmer Gubbins whispered over to himself the sheep he had already counted: 'Two very good quality Long tup tegs, one pretty good quality Romney Marsh double-toothed gimmer,' and so on, and when he was quite sure that he had a firm grasp, so to speak, of the first five sheep, he turned his attention to the gate again and, lo and behold, what should he imagine coming through but a remarkably fine Lincoln-Rambouillet cross-bred ewe hogg!

The annoying thing was that he couldn't remember for certain that it *was* a Lincoln-Rambouillet cross-bred ewe hogg. He only knew that it was a sheep he had seen in a photograph in his text-book on sheep-breeding, and he was sure that he would never get a wink of sleep that night until he remembered what kind of sheep it was. So he thought and thought, until at last he got out of bed and lit the candle and put on his trousers and went down to the kitchen and got out his text-book and carefully turned over the pages until he found the animal he was looking for among the American sheep.

The Expert Tries It

It relieved his mind a lot to know that it was a Lincoln-Rambouillet cross-bred ewe hogg, but he was a trifle cold when he got back to bed.

Fixing his closed eyes once more on the gate he saw a bunch of Scotch Blackfaces, evidently with a dog or two behind them, coming through helter-skelter. They were in such a hurry that it was impossible to count them, so he imagined the whole lot on the other side of the gate again and brought them through one by one so that he was able to count a dozen winter ewes, four six-toothed wethers, nine double-toothed gimmers and one little heeder. Then he went right back to the beginning to determine how many sheep had come through the dratted gate from the time he saw the first Lonk tup teg.

And so, to be brief, Farmer Gubbins had a very busy night. After the first hour or two he was thoroughly mixed up, but it couldn't be helped. In any case, Border Leicesters, whether he had counted them right or not, made a good show, and there was some very fine mutton among the Shropshires, while Cheviots, Welsh Mountains and Oxford Downs were up to average. At last, toward morning, he imagined an enormous flock of Suffolk four-toothed wethers on the other side of the gate, and it was such dull work counting them coming through that he got drowsier and drowsier until finally he fell fast asleep as it were at his post.

The following night he imagined himself leaning over a pig-sty prodding a pig in the ribs—just the same old pig all the time—and cured his insomnia.

P. A. S.

A doctor says that city men who take up childish games at the seaside generally suffer from the after effects. It is indeed sad to see a middle-aged stockbroker in the first throes of Yo-Yo finger. (10.8.32.)

THE STING IN THE TALE

I have decided never again to argue with my wife. In future I shall tell her and, if contradicted, register my disagreement. I am one of

The Sting in the Tale

those people who thoroughly enjoy a good argument. It is to me like a game of chess carried on according to certain rules and patterns. The latter are very varied, but they exist. My wife disregards all set rules and forms. She is like a puppy chasing its tail, waltzing round in circles and suddenly darting away to nip your heel. She becomes abusive when defeated.

It happened at breakfast this morning when we were discussing the date of her cousin Nora's wedding.

'It must have been 1927,' said Judy, 'because I remember that your Felstead won the Derby. It was the year Hilary left the Army. You *must* remember because we all went with the Pennycuicks, and you said it was such a pity that Hilary had been at school at Fettes and not Felstead, otherwise we should all have backed him—the horse, I mean.'

'Felstead won in 1928,' I said, 'the year Tipperary Tim won the National. Nora wasn't married in that year, because she was in China then.'

'She couldn't possibly have been. I remember it all so well. When you made that remark to Hilary, Mrs. Pennycuick said——'

'In point of fact', I replied, 'I have never been to the Derby with Hilary. We went with his young brother and Nora's sister in 1929, and I then said that it was a pity it wasn't the year before as we should have known what to back. *He* was at school at Felstead. What Mrs. Pennycuick said isn't evidence.'

'You're quite wrong,' said Judy. 'I'm positive about that remark. We got very good odds too, about ten to one. She must have been married in 1927.'

'But', I insisted, 'Felstead won in 1928 at the good outside price of thirty-three to one. I couldn't have made that remark in 1927; I'm not as clever as all that. Seeing that all the facts which you have put forward to confirm your story are wrong, am I not justified in suggesting that your story also is false?'

'Felstead', said my wife with finality, 'won in 1927 at ten to one, the year in which we went to the Derby with Hilary, the year Nora got married.'

I reached for the phone and dialled.

The Sting in the Tale

'Hallo, Hilary,' I said. 'Have you ever been to the Derby with us? No? I thought not.'

'Anyway Felstead won in 1927 at ten to one,' persisted Judy.

'And, Hilary,' I continued, 'what year did Felstead win? 1928? And what price, do you remember? Thirty-three to one? Thanks very much, old boy, just having an argument. Cheerio.'

'Anyway Nora got married in 1927,' concluded Judy, defiant. Again I reached for the phone and again dialled.

'Sorry to awaken you so early, Nora,' I said, 'but I'm arguing with Judy. What year did you get married? 1926? Thanks so much.'

'Anyway,' said my wife, 'you've got egg on your mouth.'

B. W. M.

AND NOW ALL THIS

Extracts from Vol. I. of 'The Hole Pocket Treasury of Absolute General Knowledge'

SECTION II

PSYCHO-BABYCRAFT

A Guide to Mental Hygiene. For modern Babies between the Ages of 0 and 3

THE OPEN MIND

This section is designed for use by NORMAL PRE-ADULTS BETWEEN THE AGES OF 0 AND 3—'the only persons whose minds, being as yet uncontaminated by inhibitions, aspirations, aspirins, hymns (Ancient or Modern), travelogues, decalogues or even logarithms, are still Open to Reason' (Muggmeister).

At this point the reader will doubtless become the prey of an irresistible desire (or libido) to know the answer to the totally frightful question: 'Is there still some hope for me?'

Well, you will just have to resist it. Before we can tell you the answer we must ask you to decide the utterly fraughtful question, 'ARE YOU A BABY?'

And Now All This

HOW TO TELL

METHOD A. OBSERVATION.

It is more difficult than you might think. But we will begin with a simple case.

As you know, *babies have no teeth at all*. Good; you are sitting in front of the fire without any teeth, but you have a long whitish beard and *whiskers which crackle to the touch*. Are you a Baby?

The answer is 'No'. You are probably your grandfather.

Now let us take a more difficult case. Babies (but not grandfathers) are very fond of milk. Now, then: you are sitting in front of the fire feeling very satisfied because you have just had some milk. You have a long bushy tail and whiskers *which do not crackle at all*. Are you the Baby?

The answer is 'No', again. You are, though you may not know it, the Cat.

Again, if you are bald or 'thin on top', you may or may not be a Baby. Some are and some aren't. So be careful.

But you must decide. There is no time to lose. As Hoggmeister says, 'The education of young babies begins *in very early youth*'. Have a good look at the bathroom. And the bedroom too. If they have recently become pharmaceutical museums full of cotton-wool, woollen cots, piffs, puffs, poofs and lids of pink celluloid receptacles then there can be no doubt about it. *There is a baby somewhere in the house*.

The only question is: *Is it you?*

METHOD B. INTROSPECTION

Now is the time to try the introspective method, viz., auto-analysis. If after a critical and exhaustive introspection you decide that you have no teeth, whiskers, tail or tobacco-pouch, and are simply a helpless bundle of blankets, bibbets, driblets, pilch-bockers and kidnappies, then you can't get away from the fact: You are It.

WHAT EVERY BABY KNOWS

Having established your status, you must impose yourself. Frustration at your age is fatal. *You must have it all your own way*,

And Now All This

otherwise you will become a permorphous polyvert. There is no other word for it.

According to Freud, all babies are permorphous polyverts; but Freud is wrong. As Foggmeister exclaims, 'The Freudian theory of polyversive permorphosis is subject to revision; babies that are not *handled* too much or in any way unduly *fondled* in early childhood develop into *non-polyversive monomorphs*'.

That ought to comfort you, even if your mother can't. At any rate it should warn you. Tell your nurses and your mothers and your god-aunts that they are not to over-dandle you, or dangle you too much, or bungle you in any way. Let them trundle you a little or push you about gently with the soles of their feet if they must; but remember, *handling* is dangerous.

Another thing—be careful how you allow people to approach you. If they approach you from behind when you are lying down you will squint; and a perverse polymorph that squints is past analysis.

DANGER OF FIXATION

Be careful about the *first* things you do.

'*Perverted primary actions*', as Fuggmeister incessantly shouts, '*lead inevitably to perverted secondary reactions, which are immediately buried alive in the subconscious vital stream*'. This just means that you become 'fixated'. In other words, if you want a drink the *first time* you feel thirsty you will find in later life that you will always feel thirsty whenever you want a drink.

You see the danger? You will get into bad habits. Eventually you will find that if you marry the *first girl* you fall in love with you will always fall into marriage with anyone you love. This is not only polymorphous but illegal.

CORRECT USE OF DREAMS

Do not imagine that just because you are a Pre-Adult you are entitled to shirk having symbolical dreams. Dreams are, of course, tremendously significant and, if *dreamt properly* and subsequently analysed properly, should at once reveal your normal hatred of

And Now All This

your mother or, better still, the Unfrustrated Intention to Eat the Grandfather.

If your dreams reveal nothing of the sort then you are just *dreaming them wrong*. Go to sleep again at once and *have the dreams again until you get them right*.

Lots of people who, following Hoggmeister's rule, began life as babies in early youth are now in lunatic asylums, Parliament, etc., simply through dreaming the wrong dreams. For instance, there are some people (apparently normal in other respects) who often dream that they *are in the bath and cannot find the loofah!*

Note.—The loofah-motif is unbelievably dangerous. A certain well-known Monogamist who came to us for treatment was alarmed by having dreamt that he was *in a room with thousands of other loofahs* (but could not find the bath).

From this we were able to tell him that his wife had probably deserted him. . . . When he went home he looked for his wife in all the usual places and could not find her, and it subsequently turned out just as we had said; she had properly deserted him—*taking the loofah withah*.

Or take the famous Débâcle case, of which most Pre-Adults have heard—but not the whole truth, which we reveal here for the last time. Monsieur Débâcle was a china merchant in Rouen. One night he woke up automatically at 3 a.m., *contrary to his usual custom*, having dreamt very vividly that there was a *bull* in his shop. On going downstairs he discovered that *it was a cow*. . . .

We might add that as a result of this shock Monsieur Débâcle became abnormally bull-conscious and was for years afterwards addicted to dream-psychophany or shouting (usually about bulls) in his sleep. Indeed he only retained his sanity by adopting a course of well-thought-out *gestures of compensation*, such as attiring himself in the uniform of a Beef-Eater and making bull's eyes at all his customers.

SOME TYPICAL TYPES

When you grow up you will become an Adult Only. But all adults are divided into types, so consider carefully, before it is too late, which of these you want to be.

And Now All This

The types usually considered worth consideration are:

(a) The commonly insane.

(b) The uncommonly stupid or Happy-go-Ugly Morons, including (1) Photons (or Moovimorons), which will not read and cannot understand anything unless they see it in 'pictures'; and (2) Photomats, which continually take snapshots without realising what they have done.

(c) Freud's Preposterot or Polymorphous Phrenopod (with brains in feet, etc.), including subconscious ballroom-dancers and football-addicts.

(d) The Thyroid or Apex Baboon of No Known Function.

Do not attempt to confuse or conceal your type. If you are subconsciously ugly or subcutaneously stupid, sooner or later the fact will come to the surface; somebody will notice it.

None of these types is *perfect*; indeed the perfectly balanced condition in which the Psycho-Vacuum (or soul) becomes Totally Equated (i.e. perfectly Aimless) is probably unobtainable even by brand-new Pre-Adults. . . .

But all this has been summed up in the now universally accepted rule that 'Something is wrong with everybody' (*Buggmeister, passim*). From which it had been deduced that 'Everything is wrong with somebody' (*Fuggmeister, cursim*).

And sooner or later you will have to answer the utterly Freudful question—'Is it me?' But not yet.

R. J. Y. and W. C. S.

We regret we are unable to say where, or who, Mr. Montagu Norman is this week. (21.9.32.)

BATHROOM HOGS

The Common Bathroom Hog, if I may so style him, like his cousin of the road, acts singly. Lying in a hot bath reading, solving crossword-puzzles or composing poetry, he holds the fort against other would-be bathers for long periods of time. But it is those who work

Bathroom Hogs

in gangs, less easily dealt with owing, as in the case of other malefactors, to their greater plausibility, that I intend to expose. Of such a kind was the Dobb family, whom I ran across at a small seaside hotel late this summer.

The Dobbs, a charming family when one came to know them, worked in a gang of five—of the whole Dobb family, in fact. Issuing from my room one morning I found Mr. Dobb, senior, entering the bathroom in front of me. Making a second attempt some ten minutes later, I saw Mrs. Dobb (as I afterwards discovered her to be) entering to the sound of running water evidently turned on for her by her husband. This time, leaving nothing, as I thought, to chance, I waited patiently outside the door; and in the course of time, again to the sound of running water, Mrs. Dobb emerged. Seeing a stranger waiting, she explained sweetly that she was sorry but the bathroom was engaged, she having turned on the tap for her daughter. Leaving me weighing deeply the ethics of this procedure, she rapped at a door farther down the passage and, calling cheerfully and without the smallest embarrassment, 'Amelia! Bathroom!' returned to her own room. I was still considering how to act when I saw Amelia approaching. Panic seized me and I scuttled for my room.

Later, at the sound of a voice, presumably Amelia's, calling close to my room, 'George, your bath's turned on!' I rose hurriedly, for by this time my mind was made up and, gathering my bathing requisites, I dashed for the door. I opened it just in time to see George, eldest son and heir of the Dobb family, who occupied the room next to mine, entering the bathroom. How true it is that quick action is the watchword of modern gangsters!

Again I took up my position at the bathroom door, determined, come what might, or rather who might, to enter immediately on George's exit. But when this, as my ear warned me, was about to occur, a youth in mauve pyjamas calmly strolled up and tapped on the door, ignoring me altogether and calling out, 'George, let me in, you old stinkpot; it's Bill!' Before I could find my voice to protest he was admitted. I had no bath that morning.

It was on the evening of the next day, the same programme with

Bathroom Hogs

little variation having been enacted in the morning, that my plans for retaliation were laid. On the third morning, timing it nicely, I was in the bathroom shortly before the first of the gangsters attempted an entry. The door was tried several times during my ablutions, which I performed in my own time; and, opening the door at last, having first turned on the water, I found myself face to face with Mrs. Dobb. I explained that the bathroom was reserved for my second cousin, on whose behalf I had turned on the water and whom I was about to summon. She looked surprised, but I gazed at her unflinchingly and she was forced to retire. As soon as she had done so I returned to the bathroom, turned off the water and, locking the door on the outside, with a fiendish chuckle pocketed the key. Thereafter, at regular intervals and choosing moments when the coast was clear, I shouted from the passage so that all the adjacent risers and prospective risers must have heard me, 'Archibald! Bath!' 'Daphne dear, your bath is turned on!' and similar news items, changing every time not only the name of the addressee but my voice with a ventriloquial skill that surprised me.

I breakfasted late that morning, and the Dobbs breakfasted later still. Before I left in the evening I made their acquaintance and, possibly because their sympathy was aroused by seeing me seated alone at table, they were all very kind and inquired more than once about my friends and relations as though they took a personal interest in them. In fact, as I have said, they were a charming family when one came to know them and extremely sociable. But that, I understand, is the danger with modern gangsters, they *are* charming and sociable—on the surface.

R. E. C.-B.

An ape crossing the frontier from Italy was shot by a French sentry. His explanation that he took it for an Italian is said to have been coldly received in Rome. (21.9.32.)

Our Institute

OUR INSTITUTE

THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Well, Fellow Workers, here we are at our Autumn Rally, and I think we can look back on a cheerful, useful and hearty season's work, don't you? From the very first meeting we started off splendidly with two co-operative hammocks made out of old boot-laces, and we also had a most interesting lecture on What to do about Earwigs. The demonstration we were to have had at the May meeting on Making Candelabra from Corks had to be cancelled as we had a report from a neighbouring Institute that procuring the corks encouraged bad habits in members' husbands. But Miss Blodge very nobly came to our rescue and gave us that thrilling lesson in How to Grow mushrooms in an Old Bowler Hat. I got some splendid results with my husband's—so good that he insisted on giving it up to me altogether and never wearing it again.

Then we mustn't forget all those jolly competitions we had in June; Guessing the Vicar's Weight, Modelling the Prime Minister in Soap, and the Best Use Made of an Old Banana. How we laughed when Mrs. Widdy dressed hers up as a doll! and what a good doll it made, too, though perhaps a bit more sallow than we like our kiddies to be, eh, Fellow Members!

And, talking of kiddies, I'm afraid that next year we shall have to be more strict about them; Mrs. Scotcher's little boy—and a dear little boy Gordon is, Mrs. Scotcher; don't think I'm saying anything against him—but he *did* rather disturb that excellent demonstration on Cutting Down Father's Trousers by continually interrupting the lecturer with 'Oh yeah!' I fear in future that we must stick to our rule of only admitting genuine tots.

In July, as you'll all remember, came our Great Federation Rally, when we were lucky enough—and I think we may say plucky enough—to carry off the County Rabbit Shield, the Busy Banner and Lady Rootlebury's Fresh Egg Cup. Our choir too were to be congratulated. They studied both the competition pieces, and, though at the performance, through a misunderstanding, the soprano sang, 'Young Lochinvar' while the seconds rendered 'The

Our Institute

Wreck of the *Hesperus*' we won the prize in spite of it and everyone said it all went off splendidly.

August, of course, was quite an orgy of Outings and Group Hikes, and we had an amusing competition for the Most Useful Thing Picked Up on a Walk, which Mrs. Honeymoon won with a dried haddock picked up on the Great North Road. Then came Bacon Week, and we all produced our Hospital Pigs—all that is, except Mrs. Weeks, whose pig died of colic the day before. But she was able to bring a new member instead, which was better still.

In September we got to work again with a will, and we're proud to claim that we've turned out four co-operative seaweed rugs and two dozen delightful tea-strainers made from old socks. We've had lectures on British Israel and What to do with Grannie when she's Bedridden; a bright talk on Refuse, and thrilling demonstrations on Rinsing, Ink-making and Trussing; How to Make Slippers out of Old Felt Hats, and a most helpful talk on the Making of Hats out of Old Felt Slippers.

Well, Friends, I think that's a season to be proud of, don't you? and that with luck we shall stand a chance of being anyway runners-up for the Excelsior Urn next year. Now we shall have tea and a Yodelling Competition, and afterwards listen to Miss Snodgrass, who has come all the way from Chalfont St. Giles to give us a demonstration—and I'm sure it will be most interesting and useful, Miss Snodgrass—on How to Remove Gravy Stains from Tennis Balls.

M. D.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE THRILLER

It was a wild and stormy night on Wandsworth Common. The wind howled down the chimneys, the rain beat upon the housetops with pitiless insistence. At No. 16, Acacia Avenue, my wife and I sat close round the fire, cosily enough, and yet I think that even then there must have been some fear at her heart, for from time to time I noticed that she glanced apprehensively over her shoulder in the direction of the window and shivered. I asked her what was troub-

The Influence of the Thriller

ling her, but she only said that there was a draught and she wished our windows fitted better.

It was past ten o'clock and we were just contemplating turning in when suddenly I became aware of a new sound in the house—a steady insistent sound—a sound, unless I was very much mistaken, *that could only come from the adjoining room.*

My wife raised her head and I could see by the expression in her eyes that she had heard it too.

'It is the telephone,' she said quietly.

Rising from my seat without a word I went quickly into the next room, and taking off the receiver, listened intently.

There was not a sound.

At last, 'Who is there?' I demanded hoarsely.

Instantly a voice answered me. 'It is I, Doctor. John Gubbins. My wife is took bad. I shall be glad if you can come immediately.'

Was it a trap? It seemed genuine enough, and yet I found myself searching wildly in my mind for any excuse however flimsy that would prevent my going. Somehow it seemed then as if I had always known it, always held locked in my heart the dread that I should have to go out to-night of all nights. When I returned to the sitting-room my wife had risen and was consequently not sitting but standing. For one second we looked at one another silently.

Then, 'You must go,' she said simply.

Those were the last words I was ever to hear my beloved wife say to me that night.

Once outside in the bitter darkness, with the rain beating on my face and the wind tearing at my waterproof like a mad thing, I had an almost overmastering desire to return to my own fireside, to my wife, to the evils I knew already rather than face the unknown horrors ahead. But cursing myself for a fool and a coward I turned my collar up higher and plunged down Acacia Avenue towards the Wandsworth High Street.

It was at that moment I became aware of footsteps behind me.

Somehow with the return of actual tangible danger my natural courage came back to me and with something like exultation I

The Influence of the Thriller

grasped my stethoscope, my only weapon, tighter in my right hand and strode resolutely on towards the High Street, mentally gauging as I did so the distance between me and my unknown pursuer.

But when I reached the corner events took a strange and astonishing course which baffled all my previous theories and left me completely in the dark.

For as I turned to the right the stranger, instead of following me, *turned in the opposite direction.*

Immediately all my forebodings and apprehensions returned a thousandfold, and I realised with a feeling very near panic that I was up against something I did not understand—some uncanny, diabolically clever enemy whose movements I could not even guess at. Why should my pursuer turn off to the left at this point? Why, if not to involve me in a deeply laid devilish scheme—some foul fate that was to seem all the more ruthless because its fulfilment was delayed?

And now I quickened my pace almost to a run in my wild desire to get out of the night into the warm secure shelter of a human habitation. But my difficulties were not yet over. Before I could reach Hill Crest Road, where Gubbins lived, I still had to cross the main street, crowded in the daytime with busy, kindly, honest people, but at this time of night completely deserted. Summoning up all my courage and looking furtively first to the right and then to the left, I crossed the road in safety, heaving heaven only knows what a sigh of relief when my feet touched the opposite pavement.

Then it happened—the horrid unbelievable thing, the event that still makes me start up in bed with fear clutching at my heart till, remembering my almost miraculous escape, I sink back with a tremulous laugh and my forehead damp with perspiration at the bare picture my fancy conjures. For scarcely more than a minute after I had crossed the High Street—I cannot have gone twenty paces up the side road—a great steam-lorry hurtled past, the shriek of its exhaust and the rattle of its crazy engine sounding like some hideous beast of the night bent on destruction.

Had I crossed the road one minute—nay, even sixty seconds—later it must inevitably have hurled itself upon me, crushing out

The Influence of the Thriller

life, reducing flesh and bones to a shapeless mass. Ah, horrible, horrible!

I panted up the hill, not daring to look behind me in case the driver of the lorry discovered which way I had gone and pursued me. Then, suddenly turning a bend in the road, I came upon Gubbins' house and stood as though turned to stone, clutching the railing with numb hands and gazing upwards with wide eyes.

There was a light in the upper window!

Bracing myself for what was to come I advanced with some show of bravery to the front door and knocked.

When it was opened almost immediately by Gubbins I was past feeling any surprise at the astonishing happenings of this night and entered without a word.

He slipped behind me and closed the door noiselessly, and with a sudden return of alertness I realised that my retreat was cut off and that whatever was in front of me I must now definitely face.

My breath was bated as I hung upon his first words.

'Come up, Doctor,' he whispered, 'it is all over safely, thank God! A fine boy!'

I gazed down intently at Mrs. Gubbins, at her wealth of red-gold hair flowing over the pillow. Then my glance turned from her to the child lying in the nurse's arms, and with a thrill I saw that all over the top of its head was a covering of bright red curls. All at once the truth—staggering, immense, inevitable—began to dawn on me; and at the same moment came the realisation that this was no time for dissimulation and concealment. I knew that the hour had come for me to strike for the truth and I struck with a firm unswerving hand.

'*Madam,*' I said, '*this is your son.*'

When I look back on the strange, almost incredible happenings of that night it sometimes seems as though the whole thing must have been part of some evil dream. Yet I know these things took place, though there is little evidence of their real meaning.

The Influence of the Thriller

When I next saw Mrs. Gubbins' son, some eight years later, he was so changed that I hardly recognised him. I never again heard or saw anything of the lorry that so nearly succeeded in its fearful purpose, nor have I ever been able to explain the weird and unaccountable incident of the man behind me in the street. All I do know is that I have never been the same man since the perils which surrounded me that night, and sometimes I am tempted to wonder if the horror and mystery of it could have unhinged my brain.

My friends share my wonder.

M. D.

There seems to have been a falling off lately in the number of peers who have been raised to the dignity of gossip writers. (18.1.33.)

GETTING THE DROP ON HIM

The London Manager of the American Trust Company sighed as he looked round his luxurious offices.

'Yes, Sir,' he said, 'I began by having some good pictures. I used to have a Scotch Moor over the mantelpiece and now look at the darn thing.'

He indicated the framed photographs of strong grim faces that filled his wall.

'Wherever I go,' he said, 'the pictures of the President, the Vice-President, the General Manager and the rest of the bunch follow me and I have to stick them up in case they visit me.'

I studied the rugged wistful features of the London Manager for a time and I felt that I would like to help him.

'Some years ago,' I said, 'I was out shooting duck on the Lagoon of Mescaltitan. I was sitting with a companion in a punt waiting for the duck to come over, and my companion had his gun resting on his knees with the barrels pointing at my abdomen. Not relishing this, after a moment or two I asked him whether he would mind pointing his gun in the other direction. Being a somewhat self-opinionated young man and more experienced than I with guns he

Getting the Drop on Him

answered me, with a superior smile, "You need not be nervous, I have been used to guns all my life." This did not quite reassure me, but I did not want any verbal altercation in the matter so presently I shifted my own gun on my knees so that my barrels pointed at his middle. After a few awkward minutes my friend silently shifted his gun, and I equally silently followed suit. No further reference was made to the incident.'

The London Manager was very interested but so far he had not seen the connection with his trouble.

'Now look here,' I said, 'why don't you have your photograph taken and send copies to the President, the Vice-President, the General Manager and the rest of the bunch?'

E. H.-J.

Some feminine types, it is said, have quite disappeared. Where, for instance, is the wife who was always at home when her husband telephoned to say he'd be delayed at the office? (15.2.33.)

CHEAPER CURRENCY

(A Note on the Financial Situation in Nafadam.)

The papers at home seem to think cheaper money a good thing. Here in Nafadam we doubt it. And we ought to know.

Your dollar may vary, your pound improve, your kroner and your franc may fall, but the cowrie shell of Central West Africa stands where it did. And will.

And it's a confounded nuisance. I don't know whether the cowrie is still on the gold basis, but if America could be persuaded to take the next instalment in cowries there would be the greatest shipping boom we've ever seen.

The trouble is, in one word, bulk. A chicken costs anything between four thousand and a hundredweight. Tantrum, our C.O., has calculated that if the Colonial Office ever decided to pay his pension in cowries there will be a fleet of fourteen motor-lorries in perpetual employment between London and Eastbourne.

Cheaper Currency

If one goes on tour for a week one's pocket-money needs five extra carriers with sacks. And if 'aninis' run short. . . .

The 'anini' is a tenth of a penny, in nickel. It has a hole in the middle, and eventually forms part of a necklace for dusky maidens that excites envy and offers of marriage.

These and, of course, brass rods form our currency. The rate of exchange in the market is:

100 cowries	.	.	one anini.
10 aninis	.	.	one penny.
2 pennies	.	.	one brass rod.
3 brass rods	.	.	sixpence.

Shopping is a complicated business. For instance, your cook has decided that he wants some red peppers for the soup for lunch. Impressing the need for caution and secrecy on your messenger, he entrusts him with sixpence.

On his way to the market the messenger shows the sixpence proudly to passers-by as proof of the trust placed in him by his master. The news spreads. People who have hitherto been sceptical about the existence of sixpence all in one lump come up and ask to inspect it.

Its appearance in the market is greeted with cheers. There is a general advance in the price of commodities.

Your messenger, knowing the ropes, goes to Ali Hassan, who deals in hides. As he is also a capitalist worth at least half a hundred-weight of brass rods he, so to speak, brasses up. Armed with three bars in exchange for his sixpence your satellite changes these into pennies with Adamu, Ibrahim and Suli, all merchants of standing. Breaking into one of the pennies, he purchases the cook's red peppers and receives six aninis and seventy-four cowries change.

It only remains for him to buy a kola-nut and some salt on personal account to come back with his turban so full of mixed currency and his head so full of erroneous mental arithmetic that there is a fight in the kitchen and your lunch is an hour late.

Sixpence is as far as we get in the market. Sometimes a shilling note filters through from Kano or Lagos, but the market will have none of them since the case of the gentleman who was unable to

Cheaper Currency

remove his wealth (ten shillings in cowries) owing to the death of his camel. He was persuaded to change into shilling notes, and walked four hundred miles before finding out that he had been given ten of the green labels from cigarette-tins.

And paper has become even more unpopular since Mr. Coker, native clerk, issuing a currency of his own with the aid of a rubber stamp and small squares of pink blotting-paper, found he could rely on the wet season to remove all evidence against him.

So when all's said and done it rests on the cowrie.

T. R. H.

In connection with the present Sino-Japanese hostilities there is one great consolation. So far neither side has claimed that they are doing it to make the world safe for democracy. (8.3.33.)

MIXED MODES

'Literary men have always tended to be unduly conservative. (Hear, hear.) Novels, within their several classes, are daily becoming more and more stereotyped. (Applause.) Possibly their authors dictate them to stereotypists. (Laughter.) I don't know. (Not a sound.) But in any case what is wanted is a new outlook, a breaking-away from the old traditions, and I appeal to every novelist not to confine himself to any one type of writing, but rather to combine as many different types as possible within the compass of a single book. (Renewed laughter, cheers and a certain amount of horse-play at the back of the hall.)'

The above paragraph (taken from an address which I had the honour of delivering last Saturday to the Penley Women's Literary and Debating Society) forms as good an introduction as I can think of to the present paper. It is stylish, arresting and free from serious grammatical error, and moreover has at least as much bearing as most introductions on the matter in hand—which is this: Why should novels conform so rigidly to one particular stamp? Why

Mixed Modes

should detective stories be simply detective stories and historical novels just historical novels and nothing else? What is the objection to a good murder mystery set in the time of Edward the Confessor, or for the matter of that to a tale of the Queen of Sheba against a background of high finance? I mean, surely the appeal of a book would be doubled if it could be described by the publishers as, say, "a gripping story of the Far East" (in *The Sunday Times*) and at the same time be recommended (to readers of the *Observer*) as 'a thoughtful study of a footman's fight for happiness'? Lovers of adventure would buy it, and so would those who prefer their reading psychological; and neither party would be disappointed. After all, there must be footmen in Shanghai.

There is nothing inherently impossible or even difficult in the idea of thus catering for two classes of reader. Children like school stories, their elders prefer blood and deduction; but the obvious advantages of combining the two under the title of

THE BOYS OF ST. SWITHIN'S; OR
WHO KILLED THE HEADMASTER?

never seem to have occurred to our hidebound novelists. At the best the theft of the examination-paper is all the thrill we get. May I ask those who doubt that a great opportunity is here being allowed to slip away to glance at a short extract from

BEATRICE OF THE GUIDES

A Tale of Horror And Mystery

which I hope to publish shortly. The extract is taken from Chapter XVII (which is as far as I have got) and is prefaced by some explanatory notes to aid the reader.

CHARACTERS IN THE STORY

Miss Endicott Smale, Principal of Maileybank School for Girls, a tall grey-haired martinet with a passion for unsweetened gin. Her guilty secret is surprised by——

Sarah Plumley, a new girl, who finds her crooning in the boot-room. *Miss Smale* threatens *Sarah* with hideous penalties if she gives her away, but the girl, unable to bear alone the burden of her terrible knowledge, eventually confides in——

Mixed Modes

Mr. Spender, the bearded music-master, whose collection of Oriental knives is second to none. He promises to give the matter his consideration, and has just taken the sobbing girl in his arms (in a fatherly way, you understand) when——

Constance Pettigrew passes the music-room window. Herself madly in love with *Mr. Spender*, she swears revenge on *Sarah*, and is overheard by——

Phyllis Budge, a high-spirited mischievous little beast in the Lower Fourth, who caused a great deal of amusement in Chapter IV, by throwing the ink at——

Miss Trench, a beautiful games-mistress, engaged to——

Dick, a tea-planter; who hasn't come into the story yet, but you never know. Nor must we forget——

Meridul, an unpopular Abyssinian girl whose place in the net-ball team has recently been jeopardised by the improved form of *Sarah Plumley* as an attacking centre. No one knows which of the two will be chosen for the great game against Crowbury Manor, except——

Beatrice Grimshaw, Captain of the VIII, Head Girl, Leader of the Guides and holder of the Endicott Smale Prize for Criminal Investigation. On the eve of the match she is making out the list in her study when the *Boots* (who supplies the light relief—and the whisky when the girls want it) dashes in to tell her that *Sarah* has just been found stabbed to death in the refectory.

NOW READ ON

'It's a shame!' cried *Phyllis Budge* to the half-dozen or more girls who clustered excitedly round the body of *Sarah Plumley*. 'A dashed shame!' she repeated; and in the tenseness of the moment. even *Violet Adams*, second monitor, forgot to give her a black mark for using a forbidden word.

'But who can have done it!' piped a junior.

'I think I can guess,' said *Phyllis*, with a dark glance at *Constance Pettigrew*, who had just joined the group. She would have continued but at that moment——

'Make way, please!' said an authoritative voice, and the girls fell back respectfully before the tall athletic figure of the head girl.

Mixed Modes

Beatrice made a rapid examination.

'This is an unusual knife, of Oriental or possibly Abyssinian workmanship,' she exclaimed suddenly. 'Where is Meridul?'

An indignant murmur arose from the girls when the black girl at last appeared in answer to the summons; but she ignored their plainly shown antipathy.

'Well, Sarah's got hers,' was all she said.

'Where have you been all the afternoon, Meridul?'

'In the gymnasium, Grimshaw—doing exercises for my figure.'

'But you're as slim as a lath!'

'They were fattening exercises.'

Baffled for the moment, Beatrice tried a new line of inquiry. 'Ask Mr. Spender to step this way, Felicity.'

A small girl sped off on her errand, and soon returned with the fascinating music-master. He was visibly perturbed at the sight that met his eyes, but Beatrice gave him no time to recover his self-possession.

'Is this your knife, Mr. Spender?'

'Bless my soul, so it is!' he replied. 'Somebody must have taken it from my collection.'

'Possibly. When did you last see Sarah Plumley alive?'

'Last Friday, in the music-room.'

'What were you playing?'

'The fool!' hissed Constance savagely, and Mr. Spender blanched. So they had been observed!

'The girl was unhappy,' he said rapidly. 'She had a serious accusation to make against—— against——'

'I think I know whom it was against, Mr. Spender,' interrupted Beatrice softly. Her keen eyes had just caught sight of a fragment of purple worsted clutched tightly in the dead girl's hand; and only one person in the school wore purple worsted!

With set lips she faced her audience. 'I know who did this thing, girls,' she said——

——which shows remarkable foresight on her part, because I haven't decided yet.

H. F. E.

Songs of a Sub-Man

A man was charged recently with stealing a bottle of whisky, a meat pie, and a cornet. It is thought that his idea was to go for a quiet charabanc ride in the country. (26.5.33.)

SONGS OF A SUB-MAN

I HAD A HIPPOPOTAMUS

*I had a hippopotamus; I kept him in a shed
And fed him upon vitamins and vegetable bread;
I made him my companion on many cheery walks
And had his portrait done by a celebrity in chalks.*

*His charming eccentricities were known on every side,
The creature's popularity was wonderfully wide;
He frolicked with the Rector in a dozen friendly tussles,
Who could not but remark upon his hippopotamuscles.*

*If he should be afflicted by depression or the dumps,
By hippopotameasles or the hippopotamumps,
I never knew a particle of peace till it was plain
He was hippopotamasticating properly again.*

*I had a hippopotamus; I loved him as a friend;
But beautiful relationships are bound to have an end.
Time takes, alas! our joys from us and robs us of our blisses;
My hippopotamus turned out a hippopotamissis.*

*My housekeeper regarded him with jaundice in her eye;
She did not want a colony of hippopotami;
She borrowed a machine-gun from her soldier-nephew, Percy,
And showed my hippopotamus no hippopotamercy.*

*My house now lacks the glamour that the charming creature gave,
The garage where I kept him is as silent as the grave;
No longer he displays among the motor-tyres and spanners
His hippopotamastery of hippopotamanners.*

Songs of a Sub-Man

*No longer now he gambols in the orchard in the Spring;
No longer do I lead him through the village on a string;
No longer in the mornings does the neighbourhood rejoice
To his hippopotamously modulated voice.*

*I had a hippopotamus; but nothing upon earth
Is constant in its happiness or lasting in its mirth.
No joy that life can give me can be strong enough to smother
My sorrow for that might-have-been-a-hippopotamother.*

P. B.

A professional dancer is said to be able to dance on a soup-plate. If he tried this in any of our London dance halls he'd have to share it with three or four other couples. (19.7.33.)

IN SEARCH OF ALTITUDE

As a rule I spend my holidays at sea-level; sometimes, on rough days, at under sea-level. But this year I decided to elevate myself and to go up a mountain and crow. Previously I had never been any higher than 900 feet—or 905½ feet, including myself—and a red-faced friend with massive calves and a yodel assured me that this meant I hadn't lived at all.

I asked my red-faced friend to suggest a mountain for me. A high and gradual one. He suggested Puissi-Ventreux.

'Is that a mountain?' I inquired, glad that he had not suggested Mont Blanc. As a matter of fact I had been warned not to go up Mont Blanc by a fellow who had come down.

'No, just a base,' answered my red-faced friend. 'Only four thousand feet.'

That sounded like a mountain.

'And where do I go if I get there?' I queried.

'Wherever you like,' he replied. 'Just leave the station, look up and choose.'

In Search of Altitude

I looked up in my imagination and found the choice difficult. Avoiding seven towering peaks, I selected the eighth which looked more like the Sussex Downs.

'Just one more question,' I said. 'If I go up a mountain six thousand feet, have I got the original four thousand feet in my pocket, so to speak, and am I up ten thousand feet? Or do they count the original four thousand feet and am I only six thousand feet?'

'Don't be silly!' he laughed.

'I intend to be silly,' I retorted. 'I'm going!'

Until that moment I don't think he'd really believed me. Frankly, I hadn't believed myself. I'm not puny by any means, but I am thinish, and if I fall I break. But now he became serious and gave me a lot of information. He told me how to avoid nine unpleasant things that might happen to me (if an avalanche descends on you, breathe on your knuckles to keep them supple, provided you're anywhere near your knuckles; and if you find yourself hanging from a rope don't get excited or you'll spin); and one nice thing that might happen to me—I might suddenly find myself face to face with a mountain antelope.

I thought that was enough, so reminded him of an appointment.

I spent the next week buying a rucksack and pick-axe, but in the end I didn't take them with me because I thought it best to arrive in Switzerland quietly. Besides, I could probably buy them locally, and I learned how to say, '*Donnez-moi une saque de ruque et axe de pique pas expensive*'.

Then on the day before my departure I rang up twelve people but couldn't get one to go with me.

I left the sea-level at Calais and gradually rose into Switzerland. Of course I knew Switzerland would be high, but I'd had no notion it would be as high as all this. You're a thousand feet up before you begin, and all around you are thousands of other thousands of feet. And just as you're getting used to them and saying, 'Well, that's all

In Search of Altitude

right,' you close your eyes for a moment to think of home and open your eyes to find a completely new set.

At last I began to think that one of the sets must be mine.

'*Suis-je ici?*' I asked the original man with the beard.

'*Où?*' he inquired.

'*Je ne sais pas,*' I replied.

So he couldn't tell me.

Eventually seventeen blue-clad porters told me all at once, and I bounded out of my seat into Puissi-Ventreux.

Of course this did not mean that I had really arrived either. Swiss mountains are never in the actual places you have to go to to get to them, and Puissi-Ventreux was merely the village I had to get to to get to either Fuizzière or Chou-le-Buibon, if I had to get to either of them to get to Altfrau—which I probably didn't. Altfrau was my mountain.

'*Quoi maintenant?*' I asked the seventeen porters when I had got my breath.

They all shouted at me again. The difference between English porters and Continental porters is that the English porters never answer you at all, whereas the Continental porters answer you in dozens. They also point. These ones pointed to a mountain railway.

I wasn't very keen on the mountain railway. It went straight up, and I prefer those that go straight along. It went straight up two thousand feet, and then it got tired and poured me out into a mountain lift that took me straight up another two thousand feet and deposited me on a mountain shelf.

I supposed the mountain shelf was Fuizzière or Chou-le-Buibon, though it didn't seem to be anywhere. The one inhabitant informed me that it was Vitry-Jalouse.

'*Pourquoi?*' I demanded.

'*Parceque,*' he replied.

Then '*Où est Altfrau?*' I inquired.

'*Voyez!*' he answered, and pointed above us to an enormous white thing that in England would be just a cloud. I was given to understand that Altfrau was beyond that.

'*Pas possible!*' I exclaimed.

In Search of Altitude

'*Pourquoi?*' he asked.

'*Parceque,*' I replied.

He invited me to enter a sort of a trap with a sort of a horse. Then he drove me rapidly along the shelf. As there was a comfortable six inches on either side of the wheels and the precipices were not more than four or five thousand feet, he slept while he drove, and woke up with a start when we had reached another mountain lift.

The official of the lift told me that the lift ascended to the Schnitzel Valley and that his mother had goitre. The combination finished me, and as the lift went down as well as up, I went down and stayed down.

And forty-eight hours later I was lying flat on the sea-level of dear old Brighton.

Where, I may add, I found my red-faced friend doing the same thing.

J. J. F.

A statistical review mentions that there are thirty-six million motor-cars in the world. And if they were all placed end to end, they'd look like the Kingston by-pass on a Sunday. (19.7.33.)

A SPIN ON THE SOLENT

'Meadows, bring out our reefer suit and see to it that there is a clean cover on our yachting-cap. The Mudsea Yacht Club is famous for its insistence on the *comme il faut* and many eyes will be on us this afternoon as we guide the *Violet* to victory.

'See, there is a capful of wind from the nor'-nor'-east. It will be a fine sight when the *Violet* starts to scud under reefed topsails past the Mudsea gas-works.

'Smartly now, Meadows. The sun is already over the yard-arm and I must splice the main-brace with the sea-dogs of Mudsea before the start. Give me a wet shirt and a flowing breeze and many will be left moaning at the bar when I embark.

A Spin on the Solent

'Is Henry at the door? Ah, I see he is. Come, Meadows, you will be required on board the *Violet* to tend the tops'l-stays'l sheet and to broach a bottle of wass'l if we win.

'Cast off the car, Henry, and set a course for Mudsea. Hard a-port at the cross-roads and sound the syren.

'Heave to off the yacht-club steps, Henry, and I will disembark.'

A CORDIAL WELCOME

From all sides members of the Mudsea Yacht Club hurry out to greet me, for it is well known that the successes of my barque, the *Violet*, are attributable less to her own sailing qualities than to the skill and experience of her owner. It is soon apparent that they are expecting the *Violet* to win the afternoon's race in spite of the superior speed of her most formidable rival, the *Pansy*. But those who are in the know realise that this year the *Pansy* will have Captain Featherstonehaugh at the helm. Although the Captain is loud in his claims of being an experienced yachtsman, those who have seen his blundering efforts to control his craft are of the opinion that his experience must have been confined to steam-yachts.

AN IRRITATING INCIDENT

A lively party of my guests are already awaiting me at the luncheon table as I enter the club. Sir George, whose position as President of the Mudsea Sea Scouts gives him considerable standing in nautical circles, is accompanied by Miss Stiggins, a prominent officer in the Navy League (Ladies' Branch), and Mrs. Gloop, immaculately dressed in a new yachting-suit.

As we seat ourselves I notice that Captain Featherstonehaugh has taken a nearby table and that he is dressed in a deplorable costume which would be more suitable for the golf-course than the clubhouse of the Mudsea Yacht Club. He further emphasises the deplorable lack of tone of his party by his loud conversation and by his audible comments on other members of the club. Throughout the meal I am constantly irritated by snatches of ill-bred conversation which float across from his table.

'... You have to pay to watch the sea-lions fed at the Zoo....'

A Spin on the Solent

'... The *Violet* must need a lot of ballast. ...'

'... Is Mrs. Gloop a member of the Police Force?'

AFLOAT ON THE BILLOWS

But my irritation quickly disappears when I find myself stepping on board my craft. With a few seamanlike phrases I instruct my crew, Meadows, in his duties of hoisting the sails.

'Come, come, my man. The mainsail is upside down.'

'That rope is caught round Mrs. Gloop's ankle.'

Finally, under my supervision, all is cleared away and the *Violet* glides gracefully from her buoy with the main-sheet full and bye and the jib-sheet bye and large.

I am about to proceed down the harbour towards the start of the race when I observe that another craft is drifting across my course in a most un-yachtsmanlike manner. It is obvious to me that a complete novice is at the helm and that my own skill is powerless to avert a collision. The next instant both vessels are locked firmly together, and I recognise that the incompetence of Captain Featherstonehaugh is responsible for this early disaster.

I quickly take charge of the situation and am issuing a stream of judicious orders which, if heeded, would soon put matters to rights. But when I find that the crew of the *Pansy* are laying hands on my vessel and attempting to haul themselves ahead, I decide that it is time to call a halt to the proceedings and to issue a few words of seamanlike reproof.

'Kindly let go of my sailing-yacht.'

'Well, then, just kindly get out of my way, will you?'

'Perhaps you would be so very good as to take charge of your vessel.'

'Could I trouble you to remove this old cod-boat from my bowsprit?'

But meanwhile Mrs. Gloop, with a few seamanlike thrusts with her umbrella, has succeeded in freeing the two craft. We bound on through the billows once more and are soon far ahead of the *Pansy* which can be seen making clumsy and ineffective attempts to get under way again.

A Spin on the Solent

A DESPICABLE TRICK

At this instant the preliminary gun booms forth and I find myself at the head of the line in an excellent position for the start. My only problem is to reduce the speed of my vessel to avoid crossing the line too soon, and with this end in view I invite Mrs. Gloop to inspect the arrangement of the foc's'le.

My ruse proves entirely successful, for this rearrangement of the ballast checks our way sufficiently to allow us to plunge over the line at the very instant that the starting gun is fired.

It is soon apparent that the valuable lead we have gained is likely to be maintained for the whole of the race, and I set my course towards the first buoy with some satisfaction. But just then a motor-launch appears bearing down towards us.

'An urgent telegram for Sir George Gorge!' cries a voice from the stern.

'We must heave to instantly, my dear Sir,' cries Sir George. 'It must be from my broker and will be of a most important and confidential nature.'

Reluctantly I turn the boat into the wind and wait while the launch, after making three abortive attempts, finally succeeds in getting alongside. I recognise the owner as one Willie Crump, a fisherman of unsavoury reputation, who proceeds to search his pockets in leisurely fashion for Sir George's telegram. At last, after a number of precious minutes have slipped away, he produces a crumpled envelope and hands it over with an evil grin.

I busy myself with getting under weigh again while Sir George reads the message. A look of rage flashes across his face and he hands it over to me without a word.

'Strongly advise you swim ashore while still in reach of land. Featherstonehaugh,' I read, and am filled with disgust that a member of the Mudsea Yacht Club should descend to such un-yachtsmanlike methods.

CAPABLE YACHTSMANSHIP

But such trickery proves of little value to its perpetrator, for at this moment I observe that the *Pansy*, after colliding with a couple of barges and the end of Mudsea Pier, is now caught up in the chains

A Spin on the Solent

of the harbour-ferry and is being towed ignominiously backwards. It is clear that she at least is out of the race.

But in the meantime the remaining vessels have drawn far ahead and I concentrate all my skill on catching them up. Sail after sail is hoisted until the very mast groans under the strain and we flash forward with ever-increasing velocity.

At long last my skill is rewarded. By the time we have reached the final leg of the course, the *Violet* had regained her accustomed place in the lead. I lean back at the tiller secure in the knowledge that nothing will now be able to overtake us.

But a sudden cry from Sir George directs all eyes astern. A powerful tug is steaming past us, and it now appears that under cover of the smoke which is belching from its funnel a yacht has been coming up fast on our quarter. I am astonished that any vessel should be able to outsail my own, but when a closer inspection reveals that the craft is the *Pansy*, my amazement knows no bounds.

MY PLAN MISCARRIES

Nearer and nearer draws the *Pansy*, sailing at an almost incredible speed, but I still have a card up my sleeve which will prevent so inept a helmsman as the Captain from passing me.

As he approaches my stern, I suddenly put the helm down and shoot across his bows, expecting that, in obeying the rule of the road, he will be forced to go about in order to avoid a collision.

But I have reckoned without the hopeless incompetence of my adversary. A cry of alarm goes up from the deck of the *Pansy*, and the next instant there is a splintering crash as she drives on without making the slightest attempt to avoid my vessel.

Panic now reigns in the *Pansy*, and a confused babel of voices can be heard shouting contradictory orders. I add my own voice to the general hubbub with a number of clear-cut instructions.

But I am astonished to find that both boats, though hopelessly locked together, are still rushing through the water with unabated speed. For a moment even I am nonplussed, and then, suddenly recollecting the phenomenal speed shown by the *Pansy*, I glance over the side and my suspicions are confirmed.

A Spin on the Solent

UNMASKED

'So, Captain Featherstonehaugh,' I remark, 'you have compensated for your own lack of skill by hiring a steam-tug to take you round the course.'

But my icy comments are cut short by a cry of alarm from Sir George. The tug ahead, which is towing us both by an underwater-rope to the bows of the *Pansy*, turns round a bend in the channel and sweeps us towards a sand-bank. The next instant both vessels are heavily aground and the rope snaps in two.

Four hours must elapse before the tide has again risen sufficiently to float us off. You may be sure that by that time one member of the Mudsea Sailing Club has been reduced to a very chastened mood.

H. W. M.

REMNANTS HALF-PRICE

Sale-time! Sale-time between the seasons—the time when the remnants of yesteryear are brought forth tenderly to the light again by the Oldest Salesman, who knew them in their youth; who thinks of the number the Department first thought of, doubles it, writes it down in black ink, scratches it out again, halves it, writes it down in red ink—and tosses the Seven-Eights-Silver-Tissue-Slightly-Tarnished back to the counter she adorns biannually. Frayed débutante of 1926! Will she go off this year? Good luck to her!

I too have my stock of pre-War débutantes; and why should I not sell it between the seasons, even as drapers sell their drapery? My need is greater than theirs, because drapers *do* sell their goods at other seasons and, judging by the uniforms of the lift-lassies, make a handsome living at it. Whereas we poets——

However I am not here to air a grievance but to offer my left-over stock cheap.

DO NOT MISS THIS!

Somebody will be Sorry if You Do! (me).

THE POETRY SALE OF THE CENTURY!

Two Rolls Good Durable Epics to be sold by the yard at greatly reduced rates in lengths suitable for making-up into Elegies and

Remnants Half-Price

Epithalamiums. Cutting-out Patterns by five of our best Publishing Houses supplied on receipt of *stamped and addressed envelope*.

Numerous Oddments, returned by our leading editors as misfits at Bargain Prices. Catalogue, with Index of First Lines, forwarded in Plain Unstamped Wrapper to all Genuine Applicants.

Three Gross Notebooks, Modern Epithets and Metaphors, in Fast Unprintable Colours. *Personal Shoppers Only*.

You catch the idea, brother poets? It's money for margarine!

Turning over my old stock I find that by far the greatest portion of it consists of Remnants. In the course of my career my teeming Muse has inspired me with more openings than I could ever hope to complete, more endings than I could ever wish to begin. I have always laid them by on the chance, so to speak; but the lady continues to teem in other directions and is strangely indifferent when I produce one of her ancient moments of frenzy and propose to polish it off. I myself have always forgotten what they were going to be about; I sometimes suspect that they were going to be about nothing at all. Anyhow, they are useless to me, so—

LET THEM BE USEFUL TO YOU!

Do You Yearn to Write a

Sonnet?

Nature Poem?

Popular Recitation?

Ode?

Love Lyric?

Pantomime Winner?

ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS TO COMPLETE THE
FOLLOWING

Easier than Torquemada!

More intriguing than Everyman.

SONNET

Whenas the . . .

Perchance . . .

Remnants Half-Price

What time . . .

(10 lines wanting)

The undecipherable scroll of Fate.

NATURE POEM

Frail butterfly, at rest

Upon this thistle-crest,

How comes it that unscathed

You sit upon . . .

(Two syllables wanting)

A POPULAR RECITATION

Gentleman Jim? Lor love yer! The Pride o' the Life Brigade!

The Ideal of all the Nursemaids what strolled Marine Parade.

There wasn't a British Seaman (they said) could hold a candle to him—

But the Handsomest Nursemaid cast in vain Sheep's Eyes at Gentleman Jim!

It chanced one Epiphany Monday . . .

(3½ lines, 17 verses and 2 more lines wanting)

And his Mates on the Wedding Morning presented a full Canteen,

Which as it turned out was Spoons and Forks—but think what it might have been!

ODE TO MY SOUL

O Soul! . . .

(Something wanting)

LOVE LYRIC

Doubt not that I adore thee,

Star of the Shah's Hareem!

In the first hour I saw thee

I knew my Fate I'd seen!

. . . my Arab steed

. . . piercing shriek

. . . Bosphorus . . . bleed

. . . Shiek (Sheik?).

Remnants Half-Price

PANTOMIME WINTER
(*Two lead-ups wanting to*)

REFRAIN

I do like sugar in my tea!

'Ow I do like sugar in my tea!

My surname isn't Kruger,

And I am not keen on nougat,

But

I DO like sugar in my teadle-eedle-ee!

Don't you, kiddies? Speak up; don't be shy. Aha, aha, I *thought*
so. Very WELL then, *all together now*

I DO like sugar, etc., etc., etc., etc.

THE ABOVE REMNANTS
and Many Others *Equally Attractive*

HALF-PRICE ON FRIDAYS!

Till the End of the Month. No Two Patterns

Alike. Don't Miss This, or

SOMEBODY WILL BE SORRY (me).

E. F.

The scenes of a new film are laid on an ocean liner. All bunk.
(30.8.33.)

SOME USEFUL PHRASES

Hitherto our phrase-books have been invaluable to the poor foreigners, but this year they need revising. Who wants to be able to say, for instance, 'Is it a wet day? Shall I take a mackintosh?' in this weather? Or again: 'Why is there no fire in my bedroom (the lounge, the hall, the dining-room, the waiting-room)?' or, 'Doctor, I have a cold (bronchitis, influenza, a chill, pneumonia).' We have not catered at all so far for 'Doctor, I have sunstroke (sunburn, sun-blindness),' and for this reason my little handbook will prove beyond price—quite beyond any price, most likely—to every foreigner. Not only does it give the phrases which the astounded,

Some Useful Phrases

bewildered and hot Continental will certainly need, but it also gives the answers (with their probable meanings) which he is almost certain to get.

For example:

ON ARRIVAL

Q. Is this England?

A. Wacherthingtis? Egypt? (Tr. Yes, this is England.)

Q. Why, then, is it so hot?

A. Seat wave. (On account of the anticyclone.)

Q. Has it been very hot?

A. Otasell. (Very hot indeed.)

Q. Is this the hotel?

A. Yep.

Q. Where is the bar?

A. 'Sclosed. (It is not open.)

Q. Why is it not open?

A. 'Sclosingars. (A Government restriction.)

Q. When will it be open?

A. Six. (Eighteen hours.)

Q. And then I can get a drink?

A. Yessir.

Q. But it will be cool by then and I shall not want one.

A. Cool! (It will still be hot.)

Q. Can I get anything to drink now?

A. Tea, coffee, cocoa, lemonade, water. (No.)

Q. Why is this water not cold?

A. Runnuterice. (We have no ice left.)

Q. Is this coffee?

A. Yeh 'tsright. (Yes, this is coffee.)

Q. Where can I get some thin shirts (vests, pants, blouses)?

A. Drapers; but they're sold out. (You cannot.)

Q. Do you sell straw hats?

A. Sorry, but we're sold right out. (No.)

Q. Where can I get a bathing-suit?

A. At the baths; but they have none left.

Q. Can one swim in the baths?

Some Useful Phrases

- A. Yes; but just now there is no room.
Q. Why are they so full?
A. 'S'ot. (On account of the heat.)
Q. Why may I not undress on the beach?
A. 'Sindecent. (A local restriction.)
Q. Where, then, may I undress?
A. In the bathing-huts provided for the purpose.
Q. But they are all full?
A. You don't say! (They always are.)
Q. Can I have some ice in my water?
A. 'Sall melted. (We have none.)
Q. Why have you none?
A. 'S'ot.
Q. What is there for lunch?
A. Rosbeef, horseradish, potatoes, cabbage and a sweet.
Q. Is there no lettuce, no cucumber, no tomatoes?
A. No; but there is some Yorkshire pudding. (A hot sweet food.)
Q. When is the next boat-train?
A. I dunno. Gotter time-table. (I will find out for you.)
Q. Are the English always like this or has something happened?
A. 'S'ot. 'Stoo 'ot. 'Smuch too 'ot. (They are not generally like this, but the heat is very trying.)

All the same I know a village on the West coast where—where no foreigners come, so it needs no phrase-book.

P. FF.

AGONIES OF AN ADOLESCENT

(Extract from a contemporary autobiographical novel, with apologies to all concerned)

We were sitting round the breakfast table a few days after my sixteenth birthday. On the day itself Father had given me a silver hair-brush. Choked with humiliation—how ghastly to be dependent on one's father of all people for a hair-brush!—I had not been able to say a single word. Now, as we sat in the dreadful publicity of

Agonies of an Adolescent

family breakfast, I still could not bring myself to look at him. . . .

'Tea or coffee, Christy?' That question, inescapable, inevitable! Ever since I had left the nursery I had had to answer it—three hundred and sixty-five times every year for ten years! And my name, mouthed and mangled by Mother, emerging shattered as Christy—what would Coleridge have thought?

I gasped out 'Tea'. My voice rang strangely in my own ears. As I sipped from the cup Mother placidly passed me I thought of all the other Christabels of the world—Christabels in spirit if not in fact—chained through their significant childhood to all the brutal savagery of life in their own homes. In the intensity of my sympathy my eyes filled with tears.

'Tea too hot?' Dumpy instantly inquired, her gimlet gaze fastened on me. She was thirteen, fat and gay and insensitive. Her thick fingers clung to her knife as she stared across the table at me. Fascinated with horror I looked at the hunk of bread she was buttering. My whole being writhed in anguish, but in the spiritual prison of our communal life I could not call her a greedy pig without being accused of nagging. Oh, for freedom—for a chance to be my natural self, untroubled by anything or anyone!

Mother was pouring water into the teapot. How engrossed she seemed! When she spoke her voice was elaborately casual, but I was not deceived.

'What are you going to do to-day, Christy?'

It was the spreading of the net—the net to hold me fast, to rob me of my liberty! The wings of my soul fluttered in panic. Before I could recover sufficiently to frame a reply she continued: 'Are you going for a walk?'

A walk! She called my heart-free lissom wanderings over the golf-course and allotments a *walk*! Oh, Mother mine, we are as the poles apart! Yet you harbour the fantastic hope that one day you and I may perhaps 'get on quite well'. As though *any* parent and child can ever feel anything for each other but cold loathing.

'I don't know,' I mumble. There is safety in vagueness, the only rock I can cling to in the perilous waters of family life.

Mother has finished her fussing with the teapot. She turns her

Agonies of an Adolescent

eyes upon me. A new terror rises up. What precious territory of mine is she determined to invade in her flat-footed resolute fashion.

'Will you have some more tea?'

It is the last straw; nothing may be kept secret from her—nothing! She must know her daughter's every shy wish, every tremulous desire. She must peer and probe, seek and search until the tender soul is laid bare, exposed to every kind of abuse and mockery.

Even to-day I was not to escape the cruel gibes, the heartless scorn. I could not answer Mother's barbarous question—I *could* not. She asked again. Then Father raised his eyes from his paper and, looking at me, said—how can I bring myself to write it!—'Day-dreaming as usual?'

Dumpy laughed. She laughed grittily, smearing butter on her gobbet of bread, flaunting her plump arms, shaking back her whisky-coloured hair.

It was too much. I sprang up and rushed out—to the rubbish-heap. Here I was alone, alone, alone! In the ecstasy of my relief I gathered up the rotting cabbage-stalks and clasped them to the breast of my clean frock. And standing there I dreamed of the glorious world of the future, in which from babyhood children will be free from parental interference—free to grow up unwashed, untaught, unclothed. . . .

J. DE F.

'Why shouldn't dentists have a slogan?' asks a paper. What about 'Tooth Will Out'? (20.12.33.)

SOGGS OF A SUB-BAD

CUB, LADDLORD, FILL THE FLOWIDDG BOWL

Cub, laddlord, fill the flowiddg bowl

And pour the driddks out faster;

Dow jollity fills every soul

Add berribedt is baster;

Soggs of a Sub-Bad

*For Subber's drought is passed away
Add Widter's cub to towd-a;
Thed joid be id a rouddeley,
Add siddg 'A-dowd, a-dowd-a!'*

*Dow icicles haddg frob the eaves;
The code has growd acute dow;
The trees are daked of their leaves;
The soggs of birds are bute dow;
The earth bedeath the welkid grey
Lies siledt add expectadt;
But we'll be berry while we bay
Add gargle disidfectadt.*

*Thed raise your voices, wudd add all,
Id cheerful polyphody;
Joid id by berry badrigal
Add siddg 'Hey, doddy, doddy!'
Add siddg 'Hey, doddy, doddy!'
Add siddg 'Hey, doddy, doddy!'
Cub sdow, cub raid, with bight add baid
We'll siddg 'Hey, doddy, doddy!'*

*Dow skies are dark add sobbre-hued,
With clouds as black as ebod;
Dow stradge hygienic driddks are brewed
With ciddabod add lebod.
Obdoxious gerbs abroad do roab;
Bed's chests with codes are strickèd,
And bic robes lurk id every hobe
Add bucous bebbgrades thickèd.*

*Thed put the kettle od to boil,
Briddg bilk add brad-dy, Babel,
Add fetch the cabphorated oil
Add set it od the table.*

Soggs of a Sub-Bad

*With brodchial bassage dight add day
Add vapour-baths a-steabiddg,
We'll wile the widtry budths away
Till Earth awakes frob dreabiddg.*

*Thed fill your glasses, wudd add all;
The best of health I wish you.
Join in by berry badrigal
Add siddg 'A-tishoo, tishoo!'
Add siddg 'A-tishoo, tishoo!'
Add siddg 'A-tishoo, tishoo!'
Your health add bide, with dide tibes dide!
'A-tishoo, tishoo, tishoo!'*

P. B.

ALFRED OF THE TALKIES

I have been congratulating my friend the film-producer. 'Don't forget', I say, 'that, although Henry VIII takes up such a lot of room, there are plenty of other English kings, and that they all have private lives—of a sort. You are on to a good thing with the English kings.'

'That's fine,' he says. 'Do you think there would be a book with some account of them all in it? Pretty useful to us if there is some such book.'

I promise to look, at the British Museum and elsewhere.

But I know of one other king for certain, I tell him, with a sure winner of a private life—Alfred the Great, of whom everybody has fortunately heard. I am invited to fire away.

'You begin in the home of the boy's father, Ethelwulf, King of Wessex. The three eldest sons, Ethelbald, Ethelbert and Ethelred, are swaggering, carousing fellows, not of a thoughtful type. Alfred, on the other hand, wonders about things and aspires to learn how to read.'

'I get you!' he says at once—'the boy wandering in a country lane and seeing some advertisements and wondering what it is all about.'

Alfred of the Talkies

'You want to be careful about anachronism,' I remind him.

'Oh,' he says—'oh, we could get round that all right; we could make it an advert. for shield-polish.'

'The whole conception of organised advertising comes rather later,' I say grandly, 'unless you consider that those white horses cut in the turf are advertisements. You might of course take that line. But anyway you get the idea. It is really the *Cinderella motif*.'

'Fine!' he says. 'If we could get Jackie Cooper to play the part of young Alfred we'd have a very moving tale. I suppose he succeeds in learning how to read?'

'Yes, he does,' I answered, 'and he receives a fine, handsome book as a reward. What is more, he gets a free trip to Rome with his mamma.'

'Rome?' he says. 'We can do a lot with Rome. Look what they did in *Ben Hur*. I suppose we could make Alfred fight a few lions in the arena, taking him as a Christian?'

'Anyway,' I go on, 'you can have fine big effects in Rome. It is somewhat after the time of Nero, but remind the public that Rome is the Eternal City and you can do pretty well what you like with it. Then there comes a fine scenic transition as you show the Danes, fed up with life at home, setting out in boats to raid and invade the shores of Old England. Ethelbert, Ethelbald, Ethelred all fall in battle against raiding-parties, and young Alfred, the fair-haired scholar, with the visions of Rome before his eyes, finds himself King of Wessex.'

'That's fine,' he says. 'We've got plenty of handsome young kings among our film-actors.'

'Now you show a scene in the Danish king's palace. But the Danish King, Hubba (perhaps it will be another part for Mr. Laughton), is shown flown with insolence, and wine, revelling and making merry, everything having gone well. Alfred, whose accomplishments include the harp——'

'I suppose we couldn't have Harpo Marx?' interjects my friend.

'——include the harp,' I go on severely, 'comes disguised as a minstrel and hangs about to see what information he can pick up.'

'It's a regular party, is it?'

Alfred of the Talkies

'Yes. This is the moment for you to bring in your big cabaret effects, the beauty chorus, the dancing and the like, and Alfred could hang around the pillars and make friends with the waiters and pick up news.'

'The makings of a swell picture, here,' says my friend.

'But wait,' I proceed—'it gets even better than that. Perhaps you wonder what's been happening to the strong Love Interest. Here it comes. Owing to mistakes in what he is told by the waiters, Alfred miscalculates—lays ambushes for the Danes which go hopelessly wrong. He is overwhelmingly defeated and compelled to flee; and the moment may well be described as "Wessex's Darkest Hour".'

'I get you,' he says.

'Very well. Alfred now wanders disguised, always thinking and planning how he can get back to Hubba. One day he comes to a cottage where the swineherd's wife—I would recommend Miss Marie Dressler for the part if she can be secured—is baking cakes. Then comes Alfred's dream. Dreams are very useful; they lend themselves to all sorts of transpositions and other lively effects. What you want to show is Alfred dreaming of victory, of the future greatness of his country, of Magna Charta, Habeas Corpus, the defeat of the Spanish Armada, the Revolution of 1688, and the long and glorious reign of Queen Victoria—in fact a sort of *Cavalcade*. *Cavalcade* was a very successful film.'

'Better and better,' he says. 'I'll make a note of that—"Alfred's dream of England's greatness". Go ahead.'

'Well, his dream is so long that the audience also will have forgotten all about the cakes. The photographer must cut back every few minutes to show the cakes yet a little blacker.'

'Fine!' says he.

'Then there is a dickens of a row. The swineherd's wife comes in, loses her temper, rates him soundly, and he takes it all very meekly. She says her husband will have more to say and do when he comes home. But just at that moment in run frightened messengers with the news that the Danes are at hand, that they have burned the farm and killed the swineherd. The widow, as she now is, has to be comforted, and Alfred does the comforting. He leads her out that they

Alfred of the Talkies

may gather assistance. She goes with him, the picture of Injured England.

'Alfred still refrains from disclosing himself. When he has a large company he leads them to a hillside, where they lie in wait for the Danes. The Danes appear, and then Alfred, throwing off his disguise, cries out that he is Alfred and leads his men to a smashing victory. The swineherd's wife can be shown belabouring the Danes with a broom, which will give a welcome touch of comic relief.'

'And then, I suppose, Alfred marries the swineherd's widow?'

'That is as you fancy. There is no objection to it. It is a democratic touch. Alfred was a democratic king. What is important is that the film should go with a swing towards the crowning of Alfred at Winchester and the rapid development of the South of England as the pleasure-resort it has subsequently become. You can do a lot in the way of travel-talk at this point, and travel-films are very popular. There is also, as you know, a growing interest in scientific films which show how things work. And so, unless you think your film is getting too long, I should now proceed to show Alfred at his leisure, inventing windows, alarm-clocks and other useful articles with works that can be shown in slow motion.'

'Lastly, remember that Alfred has a strapping daughter, Ethelfreda, afterwards known as the Lady of the Mercians. A few slight liberties will easily be pardoned for the sake of your youngest and most attractive star learning to shoot with bow and arrows. You will thus be able to close your picture on a family note perhaps more completely than the producers of *The Private Life of Henry VIII* have been able to do.'

'Who would ever have thought', he murmured to himself, 'that there would be all this money in history.'

D. W.

An early-rising cook surprised burglars in a suburban house recently. It would surprise anybody. (3.1.34.)

How to Run a Bassoon Factory

HOW TO RUN A BASSOON FACTORY *or, Business Explained*

PRELIMINARY NOTICE

From time to time, doubtless, many of our readers will want to give up working for a living and launch out as Captains of Industry. Accordingly, for the benefit of those who feel that they are in a rut and who want to start in to-day to make a fortune, Mr. Punch proposes to provide a series of articles (all from the pens of acknowledged experts) on how to license, start, stop, run, maintain, overhaul and drive in traffic a really modern business. We open this series of Articles for Future Peers with

I.—SORTS OF BUSINESSES (*or SPECIES OF BUSNI*).

There are two main sorts of businesses:

(1) Buying something and making something out of it. This is called Manufacturing.

(2) Buying something and making a lot out of it. This is called Retailing.

There is a third species known as a Wholesaler or Middleman, which simply buys a thing at one price, puts it in a paper bag and sells it at another. The Middleman is commonly called a Parasite, except on the Stock Exchange, where he is known as a Jobber.

The actual method by which a business is carried on depends on what is called its Constitution. It may be—

(1) *A Private Trader* (or Family Firm)—rather dying out but still to be seen in the quaint old survival, the Family Butcher.

(2) *A Joint Stock Company* (on no account to be confused with a Touring Stock Company). The main difference between the two is that a Private Trader is a single person with limited assets and unlimited liabilities, while a Joint Stock Company (or Co.) is a lot of people with limited liability and almost unlimited assets. That is to say, if the concern is in debt the Private Trader must pay whether he has the money or not, while the Joint Stock Company (Co. Ltd.) need not pay if it can't. The acute reader will therefore see that it pays to be a Joint Stock Company, because one is then able to plead the Gaming Act.

How to Run a Bassoon Factory

For our purpose we shall assume that all our readers are Co.'s and very definitely Ltd. *This is important.*

Control.

A Company consists of Shareholders who provide the money and are sent circulars. Its control, however, is vested in a Board of Directors. Please note carefully that the control is not *given* to the Directors. It is *vested* in them. Why, I am not sure, but it is always done. It is desirable, if possible, to be a Director.

Directors

There are several sorts of Directors, viz.:

- Ordinary Directors.
- Extraordinary Directors.¹
- Curious and Interesting Directors.¹
- Elected Directors.
- Selected Directors.
- Managing Directors.
- Guinea-Pig Directors.
- Active Directors.
- Sleeping Directors.
- Indirectors.¹
- Directors.

The functions of Directors are important but rather vague. As their work is almost entirely Thinking they do not work very long hours, and it is essential that they should spend Saturdays in the open air to recuperate. If you are a Director and someone insinuates that you do not work very hard it is usual either—

- (1) To sack him on the spot; or
- (2) To point out that reading *The Times* helps you to decide on Policy; or
- (3) To explain that the whole success of the firm depends on social contacts at your club.

In any case it is as well to offer with some bitterness to swop your job for his, and then go on quickly to some other matter.

A special word is necessary about Managing Directors. A Manag-

¹ Avoid these.

How to Run a Bassoon Factory

ing Director is a man who really knows where the factory is and even goes there sometimes. It is advisable to have a Managing Director.

Nature of the Business

The grand principle is to make or sell something which people either

- (a) Must have, e.g. Food.
- (b) Will have, e.g. Clothes.
- (c) Can be made to have, e.g. Patent Medicines.

If possible, avoid *permanent* things. It is very nice to sell a grand piano, but the chance of a weekly order is remote. Most of the big fortunes have been made from things which wore out nice and quickly and couldn't very well be repaired, e.g. Beer. By all means, if possible, establish a Habit. A lot of money has been made out of the silly habits of smoking and chewing gum. There is a sizable fortune awaiting the man who can give the public the bassoon-playing habit.

Alternatively, if you have no capacity for originality, do something which has been done before. Frankly, I don't much care *what* you make. That's your business (ha! ha!), and if you haven't a fixed idea that you could make a pile of money out of indiarubber cutlery or hairpins, you've no right to be going into business. I will offer only one word of advice—don't worry if there doesn't seem to be much of a market for the thing you want to make. There was once an American who made a huge fortune out of collecting old tins and making them into finger-plates for doors. Remember that *someone* makes a living out of putting spots on rocking-horses, making toothpicks, printing texts, and making tools to make tools to put the bristles in toothbrushes. There's plenty of scope. Go in and win; and next week I'll tell you how to finance your Company.

N. B.

King Takes Count

KING TAKES COUNT

(The American Radio Commentator puts over a Chess Match)

'Good evening, folks! By courtesy of the Shimmer Silk Stocking Company we're bringing you right into the final stage of this international chess-play contest between Ivan Checkoffski and Carlo Gambito. Ivan, he's the swellest king-knocker in Russia, and that's saying some—well, he's using the black bits for his work, and Carlo, who comes from Chili—and I'll say they're hot down there—he's Mister White.

'Right away now I'll tell the world this ain't going to be no decision bout. Checkoffski's liable to make the home plate any minute now. He's sitting back there easy-like, picking the spot where he'll land his final wallop. That Carlo's gotten his coming to him for fair. Daresy he might stall it off a while longer; he's quick on his feet and he's making his man come and fetch him; but, aw, what's the use? It's the big end of the purse for little Ivan, folks.

'Say, though, it ain't been Fifth Avenue roses all the way for the Russki and his Harlem boys. That Carlo's sure been mixing it good'n plenty ever since the show-down. Dandy in-fighting, stiff work along the sidelines, and every now'n then—blam! like he was Babe Ruth. That Wop ain't yellow. Nossir. He ain't lying down.

'But, folks, he's all in. He's in a bad jam. His defences is all busted wide open like they was the doors of the Shimmer Silk Company's Stores when the goods is marked down a quarter. Both his castles is gone. One of 'em went so easily you wouldn't believe it. There's a coon comes strolling down the sidewalk, just loafing along like he was a lot early yet for the crap game. Nobody don't mind him, and the janitor don't tell him to beat it, when—wiff!—he's in through the back door, and next minute there's the black flag hanging outer the transom. Carlo's other burg took a while longer, but the demolition gang they had it.

'Just cast your lamps on that bishop of Carlo's. All frozen out on the edge of the campus like he was a sophomore scared to come'n play else the co-eds'd razz him for losing the gin. And for why? 'Cos there's a bunch of toughs waiting to give that bish the works once he tries to make a getaway. Stay put, preacher man, stay put!

King Takes Count

'And Carlo's Great White Queen! Folks, what they done to that moll was a shame. There she was handing out the blond bandit act along the boulevard all among the nigger-boys. And did they fall for her? Say, have you ever seen what Mae West does to 'em? Well, that dame was sure doing that and then a little, when round the corner comes a mounted bull riding along like he was Tom Mix. "Station for yours, sister!" he says, and pulls her in. And they put that baby behind the bars. Wouldn't that make you cry?

'Well, folks, that's how tricks seem right now. There's poor Carlo wearing that worried look like he was a jane whose stockings go bag at the knees 'cos they ain't Shimmer Silk. He just keeps shifting the big shot's apartment to the one next door, but Ivan's got a squad round that block watching the fire-escapes as well as the main entrance. It's the K.O. drops for H.M., and that not tomorrow either.

'Here come the killer men! There's a coupla black bimbos in front there that's sure got republican ideas. One of 'em steps right up and jerks a tear-gas bomb through the plate-glass. King makes a break for the larder window, but there's a guy on horseback outside there with a rod. "Well, don't we have fun?" says this caballero. "Just put 'em right up. Me and a few friends here has been planning to take you for a nice little ride. Best be a good boy and come to it."

'So here's the towel in; and here's the ref. holding Ivan's mitt up in the air; and here's the swells in the ten-dollar seats reaching for their hats; and here's Ivan's girl friend climbing through the ropes to give her man a great big kiss. And here's Carlo's manager with a challenge for a return bout; and here's the cameraman ready for the close-ups; and here's Ivan coming to the mike to spiel his little bit. So I guess I'll fade out.

'Folks, this broadcast has been given you by courtesy of the Shimmer Silk Stocking Company. Good night, folks, and glad to have had you all listening.'

K. R.

Lower Fourth Essays

Large consignments of boot polish have been sent from America to Central Africa. The natives are said to be delighted with the new face cream. (28.2.34.)

LOWER FOURTH ESSAYS

OLD TESTAMENT HEROES

Nearly everyone was pretty brave in the olden days. They had to be because the rule was the survival of the fittest or nothing, and nothing was no good to them. In chronic order I should say Daniel was one of the bravest because he used to weigh the lions and find them wanting. Later on he became known as Dan and married Beersheba a fascinating Queen whom he saw in her bath. She was the mother of about a tribe of Israelites in good time. Luckily King Nebudchadnezza was put out to grass so he couldn't stop this.

Samson was an especially brave man. He went about doing a lot of good work with the jawbone of an ass until he absolutely lost his hair and brought the house down.

One of the most famous warriors was Jehu. He stuck up for Naboth against Jezebel who was rather scarlet and went to the dogs. He also rode furiously. Moses who was found by Pharaoh's daughter in a burning bulrush was another great leader. He led about a thousand Israelites across the Dead Sea and they all came out alive. He could also get blood out of a stone when he was angry.

Jacob might easily have been a hero but he dreamt he was walking under a ladder which is frightfully bad luck so he lost his parentage.

Lot was another great leader but his wife was a great handicap as she would keep looking back to Tomorrow. However she was soon turned into a pillar of salt and she stands there to this day.

Abraham who had children all over the sands of the seashore was not particularly brave and rather old all the time.

Joshua was the greatest soldier of them all. Having crossed Jordan ('One more river to cross') he simply blew the city walls to Jericho. Noah who took two of everything into the Ark was the greatest sailor. There were no airmen in those days though the Manna (a

Lower Fourth Essays

sort of white food and a Derby winner) must have come from somewhere.

I have left Samuel I and Samuel II until the end because they weren't really heroes and one of them broke Eli's neck.

To end up David and Jonathan who were very keen on each other slew thousands and thousands of Hittites, Levites, Hiveites and people. They were rather like Derby and Joan in other ways. After David had killed Goliath he began begatting crowds and crowds of Jews, but Jonathan preferred fighting.

B. O. B.

'What exactly is "The Call of the West"?' asks a writer. The reply is, 'Come up and see me sometime.' (21.3.34.)

AS OTHERS HEAR US

IN THE LOWER FOURTH (GIRLS)

'Did you see?'

'“I see,” said the blind man.'

'“No, you don't,” said the dumb man; “Yes, he did,” said the deaf man; but did you really see?'

'See what? You are a fool.'

'We're not allowed to say fool—fool yourself.'

'Fowl, then. Hee, hee, hee, that's rather good.'

'So it is. Fowl instead of fool. Let's always say it.'

'Yes, let's.'

'Hee, hee, hee.'

'Let's tell the others.'

'No, let's not. Then they won't know what we mean when we say it, hee-hee-hee.'

'That'll be frightful fun.'

'Yes, won't it? Fowl.'

'Fowl yourself.'

'I didn't mean fowl *you*; I just meant fowl.'

'Well, you haven't yet said what it was.'

As Others Hear Us

'What was what?'

'What you said did I see just now.'

'Well, did you?'

'I don't know yet what it was, so how do I know? I don't believe it was anything.'

'Yes, it was; it was marvellous.'

'I shan't believe it was unless you say what it was.'

'Well, you know the garden?'

'Yes. What garden?'

'The garden. Well, you know the top dorm. window?'

'Yes. Once a person dropped a pair of scissors, and it might easily have killed a person walking underneath, if they had been.'

'Yes, easily. Were they?'

'No. Do buck up.'

'I am. Well, you know where the prefects sometimes sit when it's supposed to be too hot, or something, near that kind of place where Joyce saw the cat be sick?'

'Joyce Jones or Joyce Merrifield?'

'Joyce Jones, you fool—I mean fowl.'

'I just thought it might be Joyce Merrifield, that's all. Hee, hee, hee, you said fowl. We're absolutely getting into the way of it, aren't we?'

'Oh, absolutely. Let's always do it.'

'Yes, let's. *Do* go on.'

'I am. Well, you know Gwen Redhead? Well, she was leaning out of the top dorm. window just now. Because I saw her.'

'Well, I don't see anything in that.'

'Well, but you haven't yet heard. She was looking at the prefects, on that kind of bench thing that they sit on. And what do you think?'

'She fell out of the window?'

'No. She'd be dead if she had.'

'Hee, hee, hee.'

'Hee, hee, hee. It was much more marvellous than that.'

'Well, get on.'

'I am. You'll shriek when I tell you. It was simply marvellous.'

As Others Hear Us

'I bet I know what it was.'

'I bet you don't.'

'I bet I do.'

'I bet you don't. Well, say, then.'

'No, *you* say.'

'That proves you don't know what it is.'

'Well, I never said I did, did I? What was it?'

'Well, it was this. Gwen was looking out like I said, and what *do* you think? Hee, hee, hee.'

'Hee, hee, hee! What?'

'The prefects looked up, and **THEY ALL SAW HER!**'

E. M. D.

'A crowd of women seldom get on together,' says a gossip-writer. But they never seem to realise this at a bus-stop. (4.5.34.)

RESTRAINT

New York.

'Come out and spend the whole day with us,' said my amiable New York American friend who lives on Long Island. 'I'd like to have you meet my little son Edgar. He's a swell kid.'

My heart sank. For the benefit of the untravelled I should mention that when visiting this country it is wiser to accept the hospitality of childless couples if you are to be received into the home-life of your hosts. The reason for this can only be understood after an encounter with the American child.

'We bring Edgar up on English principles,' continued my friend. Across the horizon came a ray of hope. 'Really?'

'Yes. We spoil our children over here. You manage them so much better in England. You teach them restraint.'

I should like to say at once that Edgar did indeed differ from the usual American small boy of which I have had such painful experience. I mean he did not present a deadly efficient toy gun and begin to shoot at sight in my direction; he did not go off into

Restraint

bursts of loud, piercing, unreasonable laughter nor jump up and down on the furniture with shouts, cries and contortions. He entered the room quietly and said nothing at all—perhaps because he was devouring a popsickle. This is a curious confection indigenous to the country, being a block of ice cream coated with chocolate and impaled on a stick. It requires expert handling to consume, particularly when it begins to melt.

‘How are you, Edgar? Pleased to meet you,’ I said brightly, holding out my hand.

(Further note for the untravelled: Never commit the unpardonable fault of offering to kiss any American boy over eighteen months and under sixteen years old in the United States of America.)

Edgar approached me, temporarily removing the popsickle from his mouth.

‘I don’t like your hat,’ he announced.

I started. He could not from the whole vocabulary of words have chosen five more likely to disconcert me at that moment. I had recently acquired the hat in Fifth Avenue, it being one of those odd tilted styles with an absurdly small thimble crown and universally affected by New Yorkers just now. I had been doubtful about its effect above my purely British features, in spite of the saleswoman’s fulsome praise; but now I knew. It did not suit me. I looked absurd in it. My day was spoiled.

‘Have you bought any candy?’ he pursued.

I shook my head and wondered how long I was to be left alone with this monster.

‘Most all the other folk who come visiting us bring me candy,’ confided Edgar.

‘I’ll—I’ll send you some when I get back to New York, Edgar.’

‘A large box?’

‘Of course.’

‘How large?’

‘Oh—so big.’ I made signs like a fisherman describing the best catch of the day.

‘No, you won’t. A box of candy that size’d cost about ten dollars.’

‘Well, perhaps I have ten dollars.’

Restraint

'You're not staying the night, are you?'

'No, Edgar.'

'That's swell. Say, why do you talk so queer? You're English, aren't you?'

'Yes, Edgar.'

'Gosh! I'm glad I'm American.'

'So am I, Edgar.'

It was at this point of the conversation that the dreadful thing happened. The popsickle, beginning to melt, was about to detach itself from the stick. To recover it, Edgar jerked it sharply—too late, however. The chocolate-cream mass leapt into the air and descended into my lap. . . . Oh, my beautiful floral chiffon gown, my choicest, favourite, most expensive frock! I leapt to my feet.

I will admit at once that I have a quick temper. It is over in a minute with me, but while it lasts it is a minute that counts.

'You've ruined my frock, you loathsome little beast!' I said, and, seizing Edgar, I shook him hard—probably for the first time in his life. Only as my hostess entered the room did I realise how inexcusable my conduct had been as a guest. With bowed head I waited for the vile Edgar to burst into recriminations.

'Well, have you two been entertaining each other?' she said.

I looked at Edgar, who had only just recovered his breath from the shaking I had given him. He said nothing. So he did not intend to denounce me after all.

'Why, what has happened to your dress?' now exclaimed my hostess. 'Edgar, you were very naughty to bring that popsickle in here. I shall have to punish you——'

'It's nothing,' I interrupted. 'It was really my fault.'

Edgar looked at me. Undoubtedly there was respect in his eye. 'You're swell,' he said; then, gathering up the fragments of popsickle that remained, he sidled out of the room.

There is something to be said for bringing a child up in the 'restrained' English fashion after all.

F. A. K.

The Pills

Potatoes are on the small side, but cheaper. Well, we must be thankful for small murphies. (26.9.34.)

THE PILLS

Although we are insured against burglary, and although the Browns kindly keep an eye on the house while we are away for our summer holiday, Edith thinks it necessary to take additional precautions. All valuables and semi-valuables are concealed in the most unlikely places. Cupboards and desks are locked and the keys hidden. In the past I have always thought these precautions sensible, but in the matter of Peter's pills they were unfortunate.

Peter is the dog, and it happened that just before we went away this year he was put on a course of pills. Edith thinks Peter a very delicate creature, and she takes him along to the vet. whenever he seems a bit off colour. This time the vet. decided he needed pills, and the pills were administered faithfully every morning. We took Peter with us to Munster-on-Sea, but we forgot the pills.

It was just as we were getting into bed at the hotel that Edith remembered them, and she insisted that I should phone Mr. Brown at once, tell him where the pills were and ask him to post them off. I said that I did not think Peter would die if he missed the pills for a single morning, but Edith said that you never knew, and taunted me with being too lazy to dress myself and go down into the hall and phone.

'Very well,' I said, pulling on my socks and other things. 'But tell me exactly where the pills are. A phone-call to Little Wobbley is going to be an expensive business, and we don't want it to be longer than necessary.'

'It is quite simple,' she replied. 'The pills are either in the white cupboard in the bathroom or in the little drawer in the study desk. If they are in the white cupboard in the bathroom, tell Mr. Brown he will find the key either in the Chinese bowl on top of the book-case in the morning-room or under the mat in the passage.'

'I had better write this down,' I said.

The Pills

'If the pills are not in the white cupboard in the bathroom but in the little drawer of the desk in the study, then the key of the desk in the study is either in the left-hand drawer of the dressing-table in the spare bedroom or in the green bowl on the shelf on the upper landing. The key of the left-hand drawer of the dressing-table I am almost certain I slipped behind the picture of Uncle Josiah in the library.'

I hurried downstairs and asked the porter to get me Little Wobbley 0010. After an interval of some minutes he announced that he had succeeded, and then sat down as near as he could (as night-porters will) to get a bit of quiet fun out of the conversation. And as I poured my message into the ear of the man at the other end I felt that the night-porter would not be disappointed.

When I had finished I said, 'You are sure you have got it right? It is most important that we should have the pills without delay. . . .'

'What number did you want?' said the voice at the other end.

'Little Wobbley 0010.'

'This is Wolverhampton 0010,' it said wearily, and rang off.

I felt something soft touch my arm. It was Edith.

'I'm so glad I caught you before you started speaking,' she said.

'I've just found the pills in my jewel-case.'

D. H. B.

AS OTHERS HEAR US

ARRANGING THE PICNIC

'If only you'll all say what you *prefer*.'

'I don't mind in the least.'

'Neither do I.'

'What would everybody like is the question.'

'Well, Aunt Dorothy said shade.'

'No, no, that doesn't matter; I'm quite happy anywhere.'

'So long as we get out of the wind.'

'Aunt Dorothy says shade, and Henry wants out of the wind, and we don't want to carry the things much farther. Besides, there's the tide.'

As Others Hear Us

'The tide's going out.'

'The tide's coming in.'

'The tide must be just about on the turn.'

'Does anybody know if the tide's going in or coming out?'

'What was it doing yesterday?'

'It was high tide in the morning yesterday, just about lunch-time, so it'll be half an hour earlier to-day—or is it later? Anyway, it'll be just about right if we bathe before lunch.'

'Mummie, can we bathe now?'

'Mummie, the tide must be going out, because look at that rock, all wet; so could we bathe now, please?'

'Look, dear, there's poor Grandmama carrying that heavy basket; go and take it at once. How would it be if we stayed *here*?'

'Yes, we could. Only it's rather in the sun, isn't it? But just as you all like, I'm sure.'

'Oh, Aunt Dorothy wants shade.'

'No, dear, not at all. Let's stay here by all means.'

'Mummie, did you mean *me* to go and carry the basket for Grandmama, or Ruth?'

'The only thing would be if that flat rock over there wouldn't make a very good table. And we could get some shade from the cliff for Aunt Dorothy.'

'Oh, don't think about that, dear, for a moment. I quite like the sun really. Anyhow, it's what *everybody* likes, isn't it?'

'I know a marvellous place just up *above* here, with shade and sun and rocks and pools and everything.'

'Oh, Grandmama, *why* didn't you let one of the children take that heavy basket? Quick, darling, run and help Grandmama.'

'Thank you, my boy, don't trouble. I've managed to get *down* here, so I may just as well go on.'

'Well, what about Gwen's place?'

'Well, the question is, could we all get up the cliff?'

'Why not round?'

'Oh, you can't get *round*. You've got to go up, and then along the top for a bit, and then down some steps, and after that I'm afraid it's rather a scramble.'

As Others Hear Us

'I must say I don't care about this wind.'

'Mummie, it's not a bit cold once you're really in.'

'Cold! It's *boiling*.'

'Michael says the sea is boiling.'

'So it is, absolutely boiling—the bit where I am.'

'If the children have actually begun to bathe already I should think we'd better stay where we are. Unless Aunt Dorothy thinks there isn't enough shade.'

'Don't think about me, dear. I only want to do what suits everybody.'

'There's a lot more shade over there, really.'

'I only want to do what everybody else wants, my dear, but I must say I find this great basket rather heavy, if it has to be carried very much farther.'

'Johnnie, take Grandmama's basket for her. No, really, Grandmama, he can manage it perfectly—you'd love to help, wouldn't you, darling?'

'Mummie, look—my feet are all covered with *tar*. Will it come off?'

'The child's quite right, it's tar. You'll have to get it off with petrol, I expect. Of course this whole coast-line is tar from end to end.'

'Quite a cold wind standing about, isn't it?'

'Henry, it's *frightfully* hot in the sun.'

'The sun's much more treacherous in September than it is at mid-summer really. I mean, one gets sunstroke and things.'

'Dear, it doesn't matter in the very least, but did you know she's put the milk in with the jam-sandwiches and it's got all over everything and leaked on to my skirt?'

'Try hot water.'

'Try sea water.'

'Try letting it dry in the wind.'

'I wonder if we'd better move a little way back because of the tide? And didn't Aunt Dorothy want to go into the shade?'

'Oh, yes, we must find some shade for Aunt Dorothy.'

'Don't trouble about that, please. I'd really just as soon stay here. . . .'

As Others Hear Us

'I must say, dear, I should have thought the poor children would be wanting their lunch by this time.'

'Why not let's stay where we are?'

'Yes, why not let's? What a good idea!'

'It seems too bad when we're all so nicely settled, but I wonder if we couldn't find a spot with a little *shade*?'

E. M. D.

The champion woman angler of Los Angeles has married her fifth husband. No doubt he is all right, but you ought to see those that get away. (10.10.34.)

LESSONS FOR LOWBROWS

HOW TO BEHAVE AT A Highbrow Party

This is not a treatise on the formalities of the fork or the finger-bowl, for there will be no forks, finger-bowls or formalities. There may be a host (unless he has gone to another party) or there may be several, but you are not likely to discover him or them unless the fun becomes more furious than fast. In this case you may become aware of someone standing on the mantelpiece and shouting, 'Damn it! I'll have to pay for those glasses, you fools!' Or (supposing, as is often the case, that the party is being held all over some intellectual and communal boarding-house) you may discover a peevish poet kicking a sitting-out party off his divan and remarking that he's going to bed anyway. This should not be taken as a signal for breaking-up. Talking of the grand finale, if there is a great number of hosts you may not become aware of the departure of all the other guests; but I cannot help you here. You must extricate yourself from the social snare as best and when you can.

To revert to the beginning, there will be no introductions, for the majority of guests do not know who anyone else is, and those who do won't bother. But do not be deterred from speaking if you have any fancy to.

Lessons for Lowbrows

Here are a few conversational gambits:

(a) 'What do you do?' This is dangerous, as you will certainly be addressing a celebrity either flood-lit or bushelled, but do not be wilted by his answer. Announce loudly that you yourself are a Group Leader of the Pubishki School of Ceramic Thought. If questioned (this is not likely because highbrows seldom express ignorance about Groups) say you can only speak to intimates about the intimacies of inverted Jabberwockism. Have no fear that Carroll will be remembered. You will have made a good beginning, and the brillig business can be kept up all night.

(b) 'British Generals *are* so feminine, aren't they?' This is a brilliant opening, because the Fighting Forces are as much rejected by highbrows as are the public schools. None will contradict you, since none will care to display any species of sex-unconsciousness, and the idea will be discussed.

Now for subjects to avoid. You must not praise:—

(a) Any member of the aristocracy; ,

(b) Any politician who is not a Communist;

(c) Any uncensored play, book or film unless it is entirely kindergarten.

Clothes are important. Dinner-jackets, tails and evening dresses should be avoided:—

(a) Because they are considered bourgeois, and both bourgeoisie and aristocrats are despised. (So, by the way, is narrow-mindedness);

(b) Because they may show the marks of drink, and *that* will be mixed considerably.

All other dress is legitimate. Bathing-suits, mechanics' overalls, pyjamas, coloured shirts and tweeds (if not well cut) are permissible. Lounge-suits are not considered to be in good taste unless they show signs of having been lounged in during a wet Bank Holiday on Hampstead Heath.

Perhaps by now you will have had enough of this and will wonder how to get away and when. The 'when' is easily answered and should synchronise with the hour of the failing of drinks. The sight of some despairing guest pouring the dregs from a gin-bottle into

Lessons for Lowbrows

quarter of a tumbler of flat beer should be as good a hint to you as the National Anthem played very slowly at the end of a rural bazaar. Yet there may be hindrances on the way. In the entrance-hall, for instance, you may find some optimistic Pole trying to fit his guitar into a lady's handbag; or, as I have said, you may confuse yourself with the hosts; or you may be run over in the Square by the guests who have taken over the driving of the milkman's cart.

B. E. B.

'Who invented high heels?' asks a writer. Our theory is that it was a short, pretty girl who was always being kissed on the forehead. (31.10.34.)

LETTERS TO THE SECRETARY OF A GOLF CLUB

From Ralph Viney, Captain Roughover Golf Club, Roughover.

5th November, 1934.

Dear Whelk,—Yes, I suppose we had better have the Annual Club Dinner as usual, and I think the 23rd will be all right; but I will definitely take no part in the arrangements. I had more than enough last year over the Scotch Woodcock—Angels-on-Horseback controversy.

Why not do without a Dinner Committee this time? I'm sure you'd find it simpler to run the thing yourself.

I will take the Chair if you want me to, but I expect to be in London round about this time.

Yours sincerely,

R. VINEY.

P.S.—All right, I will ask some 'reasonable person this time', as you put it, to propose your health at the end. You can trust me to make it appear that the request did not emanate from you.

From Admiral Sneyring-Stymie, C.B., Roughover.

Thursday, 8th November, 1934.

Dear Sir,—I have received a letter from the Captain suggesting

Letters to the Secretary of a Golf Club

that I propose your health at the Club Dinner on the 23rd November. I presume you asked him to write to me.

I shall be glad to meet your wishes in this matter, but I warn you I intend to be very frank, and what I have to say will not be at all laudatory. However, I suppose I shall let you down easier than anyone else.

Yours faithfully,

C. SNEYRING-STYMIE.

From General Sir Armstrong Forcursue, K.B.E., C.S.I., The Cedars, Roughover.

10 11 34.

Sir,—What on earth do you want to have another of those ghastly Club Dinners for? Surely you learnt a lesson at the last one when you nearly had to make a public apology for the way Lionel Nutmeg ate his grapefruit?

I do not think I shall come, but if I do I agree to propose the health of 'Our Guests'.

Yours faithfully,

ARMSTRONG FORCURSUE.

P.S.—I suppose you will want me to recite 'The Evening Wind', by William Cullen Bryant, as usual?

From Lionel Nutmeg, Old Bucks Cottage, Roughover.

November 13th, 1934.

CLUB DINNER

Sir,—I hear that Mark Bellows, O.M., is to be the guest of honour and that you have invited Forcursue to propose 'Our Guests.'

In the name of Heaven, *what are you playing at?* Surely you haven't forgotten that Bellows was the man Forcursue had the row with over moving the loose impediment on the 8th green in 1928?

Although I have absolutely no time for guests in any shape or form, I do feel that something should be done about *this*.

Letters to the Secretary of a Golf Club

In any case, if Forcursue is allowed to make a speech at all, I shall most seriously consider not coming.

Yours faithfully,

LIONEL NUTMEG.

From Anthony Olders, Crimea House, Roughover.

14 11 34.

Dear Sir,—I regret that I shall not be able to attend the Annual Club Dinner on the 23rd as I am laid up with gout and likely to be for some time. I am most annoyed, as this will be the first time I have missed the function for thirty-one years.

I would, however, be glad if you would read the enclosed typescript (after the apologies for absence). It contains a *résumé* of my speech for last year which General Forcursue so rudely interrupted, and deals with Golf Rule No. 17, Section 2: 'A Ball Lodging in Anything Moving'. I am sure all members will be most interested.

It is my intention to send a copy to the Rules Committee at St. Andrews at an early date, and I am confident that once they have read it they will amend the wording of the rule very considerably. You might mention this as it should give the subject greater weight.

By the way, kindly note the *errata*—On page 9, for 'napkins' read 'hatpins'; and on page 24, for 'ball' read 'bull'.

Yours faithfully,

ANTHONY OLDERS.

From Angus McWhigg, Glenfarg, Roughover.

14 11 34.

Dear Sir,—Why don't you make the cost of the Club Dinner inclusive of wines and spirits? I suppose it is because the hotel where you are having the meal won't give you a rake-off on all liquor served?

I expect the dinner will be very badly attended. It is the cheap night at the Picture House. I do not think I shall come.

Yours faithfully,

A. McWHIGG.

Letters to the Secretary of a Golf Club

*From Mrs. Truelove, wife of Professor Truelove, D.Sc., F.Inst.P.,
Château Ichneumon, Roughover.*

Thursday.

(VERY PRIVATE.)

Dear Mr. Whelk,—I hate troubling you, but it is about my Reggie. He is, as you know, going to the Club Dinner, and I am always rather nervous when he is out at night by himself after 7.30.

Now, please, Mr. Whelk, *do* keep an eye on him or arrange to sit beside him and see that he doesn't overdo things, etc., etc. You know what I mean, don't you?

I shall probably prevent him from going at the last moment, but this is just in case he gives me the slip.

Yours sincerely,

M. TRUELOVE.

P.S.—Why are lady members not allowed to come to the Dinner? I think the men are very selfish. It isn't as if they were better golfers, because I beat Mr. Nutmeg twice last year, playing level.

From Herbert Pinhigh, J.P., Roughover.

15 11 34.

Dear Sir,—If you have the same band to play during dinner as last year I am not coming. They were far too keen on all this modern highfalutin' stuff like *The Merry Widow*.

If you will promise to get them to play *The Men of Harlech* and the *Keelrow* I might be persuaded to buy a ticket.

Yours truly,

H. PINHIGH.

*From Commander Harrington Nettle, C.M.G., D.S.O., Flagstaff
Villa, Roughover.*

Sir,—I notice that on the table plan for the Club Dinner which you have put up on the notice-board this afternoon I have been placed to sit between Mr. Lionel Nutmeg and yourself.

Unless you alter this immediately I shall report you to the Committee for having no clean towels in the dressing-room (the downstairs one) last Friday.

Letters to the Secretary of a Golf Club

Surely you know by this time that I like to be near the serving-hatch so that my food isn't stone-cold before it reaches me?

Yours faithfully,

HARRINGTON NETTLE.

Anonymous letter from 'Well-Wisher', bearing Roughover postmark.

Dear Sir,—This is to warn you that Mr. Lionel Nutmeg intends to bring his cornet to the Club Dinner on the off-chance of being invited to play a solo after the speeches. I should strongly advise you to see that this is taken away from him by force as soon as he arrives, otherwise there is likely to be trouble.

Yours, etc.,

WELL-WISHER.

From Ralph Viney, Captain Roughover Golf Club, Roughover.

24th November, 1934.

Dear Whelk,—I must write and compliment you most highly on the way the Dinner went off last night—a marvellous show and everyone so happy, the General and the Rev. Brassie actually nodding to each other after the former had recited 'The Evening Wind', which shows you the amount of good will there must have been about as they haven't been on speaking terms since F. discovered it was the padre who put the decomposed rabbit in his golf-bag. Heartiest congratulations.

Yours very sincerely,

R. VINEY.

P.S.—McWhigg's impromptu sword-dance was as good as a play, and wasn't Nutmeg's cornet-playing marvellous? I never knew he had it in him.

G. C. N.

DIARY OF A TOWN-DWELLER

Dec. 18th.—Thought it best, when Baffy Entwhistle rang up to-day to ask if I would join his Swiss party at Spruzel, to make it clear that, so far from being winter-sportsman, had never handled

Diary of a Town-Dweller

a curling-pin and had v. profound terror of slippery surfaces. Baffy replying that skis were safe as bath-chair in Harrogate, recounted to him significant adventure of my great-uncle Lemuel, who came v. near to his death in one of those actual vehicles in that town in '79. Finally agreed to go on condition that I should never be coerced into overtaking my technique. Certainly here seems first-class opportunity for enlarging experience.

Dec. 27th.—Arrived in what must have been Spruzel before it began to snow. Baffy led me forthwith to large timber warehouse and fitted me out with planks or skis, and afterwards handed me over to v. brown gentleman with bare knees and lager-beer name, who is to instruct me. Asked, do I sit, kneel or lie, and suggested that for greater rigidity we should first nail cross-bars fore and aft. Instruction then began. . . .

Jan. 7th.—Even Pepys occasionally drew veil over inmost agonies. Am still too bruised and exhausted to survey last ten days with any real calm, but must admit can now traverse nursery slope without either continuing into hotel chimneys or seriously wounding other nursery colleagues. Certain portions of technique still escape me, but Baffy insists that time has come for me to essay immemorial snows. Too weak to offer much resistance, and am therefore due to go on main Spruzel run, the Dunkelbrau, to-morrow.

Later.—Have called on village pastor and made all arrangements for interment, and have also bought much bigger flask.

Jan. 8th, 9 a.m.—Set out after breakfast with Baffy and two others, clad in my full glacier-costume, with patent heaters in pockets, at which Baffy affects ridicule. Super-tram takes us some way up Leberwurst valley, when Baffy says we are to climb for three hours on skins to Blitzen Hut, and from there run down Dunkelbrau Pass ten miles, back to railway, Ask, whose skins? Replies seals' skins, which are v. non-skid. Express surprise that these beasts indigenous to eternal peaks, but awaken no response in my comrades.

9.50.—Start climbing steep path up vulgarly large mountain. Unimaginably cold up here. V. glad of patent heaters, which are burning splendidly.

Diary of a Town-Dweller

10.15.—Not so glad of patent heaters. Refrain from saying so.

10.25.—Others begin to shed jumpers.

10.35.—Ask, does anyone know how to stop patent heaters heating? Only reply, coarse shout of laughter.

10.40.—Hurl patent heaters into immemorial snows and remove two layers of clothing. Try draping these over rucksack of man in front, but am unfortunately observed.

11.20.—Half-time. Am almost dissolved with heat and fatigue. Putting my flask out of bounds until lunch-time, Baffy offers me a handful of snow. With remaining strength make not unpowerful retort.

11.55.—Still tottering upwards. Have tried fainting, but Baffy commandeered my flask before pushing snow down my neck. Resolve not to faint again.

1.5.—Blitzen Hut. Never has wooden bench seemed softer nor garlic sausage more alluring. Baffy returns my flask, almost empty. Fortunately B. Hut equipped with formidable liquid assets.

2.05.—Elation has happily supplanted fatigue. Recite nine verses of *Ancient Mariner* to American lady with hiccups, before standing on head for delectation of bearded Japanese. Skis then waxed for greater speed and buckled on again. Baffy leads me to edge of precipice on far side of hut and, pointing genially downhill, assures me, in case we get separated, that it will take me no time to reach station. This I readily believe.

2.10.—Am inquiring of Baffy why technique does not allow of precipices being descended on skins when sharp poke in back, from whom shall never know, sends me headlong to my fate.

2.10½.—Have acquired unbelievable velocity. Blitzen Hut already only dim memory. Am of course sitting down, procedure in which have greatest faith.

2.11.—Am not obeying helm quite as accurately as could wish. Rapidly overhauling four female skiers.

2.11½.—Have overhauled female skiers and ricocheted off all four. Acceleration miraculously unbroken.

2.13.—Cannot see, hear or think for wind whistling in moustache.

2.14.—Wind has ceased to whistle (in moustache), as, after

Diary of a Town-Dweller

violent swerve off track, am buried in huge snowdrift. Further movement impossible. . . .

3.20.—Have apparently had nap and am much refreshed. Am beginning to wish for rescue when loud report tells of another body in conflict with snowdrift. Hoarse voice, raised in blistering vituperation, strikes suddenly familiar. Can it be my old enemy, Algernon Humbottle? It can. Moreover his entry has loosened snow sufficiently for me to back out. Cry, Ha, Humbottle, you old geyser! prod him jovially in calf with ski-stick, and take wing again with something like joy in my heart.

3.35.—Am standing up, for excellent reason that dare not sit down. Travelling so fast that it all seems like a dream.

3.42.—Small village approaching in my path on port bow. Church bells pealing wildly. How did they know? Would be warmed by this little attention if capable of feeling, which am not.

3.44.—Wedding procession across village street offers alternative reason for bells.

3.44½.—Wedding procession broken. So am I, completely, but velocity unimpaired. Top hat of best man now decorating starboard ski-point. This looks v. gay, but all same could wish my head enveloped in bridal veil.

3.49.—Find am sitting again. Why not?

3.51.—Through bridal veil descry lights of station, like dim stars.

3.52.—Descry large number of v. vivid stars as crash headlong into vague hulk of some huge mountain beast.

3.52½.—Mountain beast turns out to be old housemaster, in beautiful voice. Reintroduce myself formally as merciful gravity whisks me out of earshot.

3.55.—While bowling furiously down final slope to station run over in my mind possibilities of station buffet. Ham and eggs, one. Hot toast, two. Hot rum, three. More ham and eggs, four. Hot. . . .

3.56.—Just in time to be dragged into last train of day by Baffy and other two. They have been in buffet nearly two hours and tell me they have consumed ham and eggs, hot toast and hot rum.

E. K. (*Eric*).

The Case of the Pursuit

THE CASE OF THE PURSUIT

'Follow that car!' cried the Great Detective, and he made to jump into the taxi.

The taxi-driver said, 'What car?'

'He's a detective,' cynically observed the Great Detective's friend, J. Smith, addressing the taxi-driver from the pavement. 'You can't argue with a detective.'

'Ho yus I can,' declared the taxi-driver with enthusiasm, clambering out of his seat.

The Great Detective cried again in a loud commanding tone: 'Follow that car!'

The car in question was a bright yellow sports model, driven by a very pretty girl in a red beret, with a middle-aged man in a top hat beside her.

The taxi-driver gazed after it dubiously. 'I don't see what you want to follow a car like that for,' he said.

'There's reason in those words, old boy,' J. Smith said to the Great Detective. 'As an old but undervalued resident of this neighbourhood I——'

'Nevertheless,' said the Great Detective, 'that happens to be the car I wish to follow. It contains a young woman whom I am anxious to interrogate about the case of the Inn-Sign Invention. The speed with which she drove off when she saw me coming leads me to suppose that her conscience is steeped in guilt.'

'Now that is where I have the advantage of you, old boy,' said J. Smith, 'as usual. I know all about her conscience. She——'

'Wadger mean, Inn Sign?' inquired the taxi-driver in the tone of one who smelleth the bottle afar off.

'What I have called the Inn-Sign Invention,' the Great Detective replied at once (for he was always ready to instruct), 'is a device of considerable intricacy invented for the use of painters of inn-signs. You will observe that an inn-sign as a rule bears on one side of its board a picture which is identically repeated on the other. A moment's thought will tell you that this involves a certain amount of drudgery for the artist, because even if he paints one side of the board while in the full flush of inspiration the process of copying the

The Case of the Pursuit

picture on the other is a laborious one. Now the device I refer to is a system of pulleys, levers and gears, all of hair-trigger delicacy, so arranged that when they are connected to the stem of the painter's brush every movement he makes with it is exactly repeated by another brush behind the board he is painting.'

'Well, if you think the piece of fluff 'as got that perishin' mangle in 'er car,' said the taxi-driver heavily, 'you can think again.'

'No,' said the Great Detective, 'all I wish to ask her is what she knows about the recent theft of the plans of the device. The inventor, a Mr. Robinson——'

'Good old Heath! I thought it was,' J. Smith said.

'A Mr. *Evacustes* Robinson,' the Great Detective corrected coldly, 'had them stolen from him not long ago——'

'It was a put-up job,' said J. Smith at once. 'He had them stolen purposely. He couldn't bear the sight of them any longer. No man of sensibility could. Besides, his wife wanted room in the house for a little furniture.'

'As it happens, I recovered them for him. But by a curious and significant coincidence I recovered them *from a man in a top hat*, and I fancy the precious pair in that car—— But we are wasting time,' the Great Detective broke off to observe; and he cried again to the taxi-driver: 'Follow that car!'

'It's gorn now,' the taxi-driver said with a fatalistic air, folding his arms and leaning against his cab. 'You shoulda told me before.'

The Great Detective assumed an expression portentous and stern. 'Your refusal', he said, feeling in his pocket and pulling out a pound note, involves you in a very heavy responsibility. You saw that the man beside her was wearing a top hat. I myself mentioned it. Now what does a top hat suggest?'

'A bowl of goldfish,' said J. Smith.

'A funeral,' said the Great Detective in a tone of deep significance. 'The revolting cynicism of being driven to a funeral in a yellow car will show you the kind of person we have to deal with. *Whose funeral were they going to?* Can we doubt that some appalling thing is about to happen? God grant that we may not be too late. Follow that car!'

The Case of the Pursuit

The taxi-driver appeared to be wavering. 'Wadger mean—they're off to do someone in?' he asked.

'Can we doubt it?'

'Certainly we can,' said J. Smith. 'As an old resident, I repeat——'

'I will give you this pound,' said the Great Detective to the taxi-driver, 'if you will follow that car, and another when we catch it.'

The taxi-driver took the note and crackled it suspiciously. Then he said in a grudging way, 'I dessay duty calls,' and clambered back with it to his seat.

The Great Detective flung open the door of the taxi, but J. Smith laid a hand on his arm.

'You forgot, as usual, old boy,' said J. Smith, 'to ask for my opinion. As an old resident of this district, knowing every pretty girl within a radius of five miles, I could have told you that the young woman was merely driving her father a few hundred yards to his office, and that she would be back in three or four minutes.'

And indeed the yellow car, with the girl alone in it, was at this moment completing the circle and drawing up behind the taxi. The taxi-driver saw this as well as the others in the mirror beside the driving-seat, and resolved to make the best of a bad job. He drove off instantly with the Great Detective's pound-note.

J. Smith took in the situation at a glance. 'Follow that taxi!' he cried, pulling the Great Detective after him to the car.

R. M.

'Nowadays it isn't wrong,' says a writer, 'for a man to take a girl out and not spend money on her.' But it's very, very difficult. (6.2.35.)

ARRIVAL AT PORT

The wise man who is timing an obstacle race between tortoises will not expect to be astonished by an exhibition of speed. Nor will he anticipate a rapid disembarkation at the port of Alexandria.

It is not the first time that Monsieur Fracas has landed at Alexandria. Nor is it a foolish and incorrigible optimism that has induced

Arrival at Port

him to arrange an important business appointment in the city for the very morning of his arrival. But it is the maiden voyage of the ship upon which Monsieur Fracas is travelling and Monsieur Fracas is aware that the port authorities no less than the shipping company itself are determined that the occasion shall be marked by a disembarkation of record efficiency and speed. With the honour of the authorities themselves at stake, Monsieur Fracas has deemed it inconceivable that there should be any delay.

As the ship approaches the quay Monsieur Fracas leans over the side and notes the preparations that have been made. The ship is a large ship—a vessel of a luxury unparalleled—and as the quay itself is somewhat small two pontoons have been made fast before it upon one of which the passengers will descend while the porters ascend from the other. Behind the pontoons stand the porters, marshalled in an orderly and expectant company, and behind the porters wait two hundred cabs which will convey the passengers and their luggage to the Custom House. Monsieur Fracas surveys these arrangements with satisfaction, tempered by a mild regret that a sudden strike of the taxi-drivers should have necessitated the presence of cabs on an occasion in other respects so auspicious. As the ship is made fast he takes up a position favourable to an early descent. The last rope is secured and the two gangways are lowered with military precision. The passengers, headed by Monsieur Fracas, surge eagerly towards the forward gangway, while the porters, uttering cries of enthusiastic cupidity, make a rush for the aft pontoon. But, incredibly, it appears that the captain has made a miscalculation. The gangways, instead of resting on the pontoons, lead into the sea.

The representative of the port authority who is waiting on the quay is overcome with indignation. The baffled porters are enraged. Even the passengers show signs of impatience.

'Move the ship!' shouts the representative of the port authority.

'Move the pontoons!' shouts the captain.

It seems that a deadlock has been reached. Monsieur Fracas looks impatiently at his watch. The captain and the representative of the port authority glare at each other.

Arrival at Port

However, it is found to be impossible to move the pontoons. The ship is pressing them against the quay. Being left with no alternative, the captain reluctantly agrees to move the ship. The ropes are cast off, the engines are started, the ship moves, the engines are stopped, the ropes are re-secured and the gangways are once more let down with military precision. Once more the passengers, headed by Monsieur Fracas, surge eagerly forward. Once more the porters make a rush for the aft pontoon. But, incredibly, it appears that the port authority has made a miscalculation. The aft gangway still leads into the sea. The captain is furious. He flings his cap into the sea. Uttering cries of rage and dismay the porters make a rush for the forward gangway. By the time that Monsieur Fracas is halfway down the first porter is halfway up.

'Go down!' cried Monsieur Fracas.

'Go up!' shouts the porter, driving his head into Monsieur Fracas' waistcoat.

It seems that a deadlock is about to ensue. Monsieur Fracas grows desperate. Aided by pressure from the rear he strives valiantly with the porter. But the porter is reinforced by other porters, all of them men accustomed to moving heavy weights and urged on by the prospect of immediate gain. Monsieur Fracas is forced to beat an honourable retreat.

Meanwhile the two hundred cab-drivers have been watching the strife with increasing dismay. Excited by the thought that the porters are in some manner conspiring to deprive them of their fares, they simultaneously seize their whips and converge on the quay at full speed. Wheels interlock, shafts are propelled violently through hoods, horses rear, and reins are woven into intricate patterns. By the time that Monsieur Fracas has gained the quay he finds not two hundred cabs but a composite vehicle with two hundred drivers and eight hundred wheels apparently designed to proceed in all directions at once.

Rejecting with a frenzied calm the loud solicitations of the two hundred drivers, Monsieur Fracas once more looks at his watch. It is growing late, but even now, if he can arrive first at the Custom House, he may be in time. He looks eagerly for his porter and his

Arrival at Port

two suitcases. Porters swarm on the quay and more porters still descend the gangway like ants. In a corner two porters are fighting. They are fighting with suitcases. They are striking each other on the head with the suitcases of Monsieur Fracas. With the just anger of a man who, having successfully negotiated a glacier, slips at the last moment on a banana-skin, Monsieur Fracas harangues the two porters. A policeman appears. The porters desist from their battle and each with the vehemence of an innocent man unjustly accused claims an exclusive right to transport the suitcases. Monsieur Fracas with no less vehemence repudiates the claims of both of them. The policeman is disgusted. He arrests both the porters. He impounds the suitcases. To make the evidence complete he also compels Monsieur Fracas to follow him to the police-station.

W. K. Z.

‘Not many people can wake up and find themselves rich,’ states a writer. Except, of course, professional boxers. (13.3.35.)

EXPLAINING TO ELIZABETH

‘Hello, Elizabeth! I’ve just heard a perfectly marvellous thingummy. You see, there was. . . .’

‘If it’s one about Mae West, I’ve heard ’em all.’

‘It isn’t a joke. It’s a kind of puzzle. Well, you see. . . .’

‘Is there a catch in it?’

‘No, no, of course there isn’t. Do stop interrupting. There was a . . .’

‘I shall scream if it was a man. It’s always a man. Why isn’t it ever a woman?’

‘. . . governor of a prison. . . .’

‘I knew it would be a man of some description.’

‘All right, I won’t tell it to you. I’ll tell it to someone who can appreciate it.’

‘No, please go on. I’m awfully intrigued really. Honestly.’

‘Well, this govenor had five discs in a hat; three were white and

Explaining to Elizabeth

two were black. He sent for three prisoners and fixed a white disc on each. No, wait a minute. I'm going too fast.'

'It's terribly thrilling.'

'It's all right. I've got it. This governor chap sent for the three prisoners and said, "I have five discs in this hat—three white and two black. I'm going to fix one disc on each of your backs and send you into another room. You are on your honour not to let each other know, by word or sign, what you see on each other's backs. I will set free the first one to come and tell me correctly what coloured disc he is wearing." And he fixed a white disc on to each man.'

'Is that the end?'

'Of course not; there's no puzzle in it yet. Well, they went into the other room and about five minutes later one man came out and said to the governor, "I'm wearing a white disc".'

'And was he?'

'I *told* you, they all were. But how did he find out?'

'Well, obviously the others had broken their word not to tell. I mean, you can't expect prisoners to ———'

'They *didn't*. This man worked it out by himself.'

'They were all wearing white discs, you say?'

'Yes.'

'So that. . . . Well, look here, let's call them A, B and C. A can see that B and C have white discs but doesn't know what he's got on his own back, so . . . '

'Take it this way. Supposing A saw that B and C were wearing black discs. . . .'

'But they're not, so why suppose it? It's complicated enough as it is without your going about supposing things.'

'*Do* listen for just a moment. Now, if A saw B and C wearing black discs he'd know that he was white. You grant that, don't you?'

'No. Why should he think he's white merely because A and—I mean, B and C were wearing black discs? And anyway they weren't, so how could he?'

'He'd know he was white because he could see two blacks, and

Explaining to Elizabeth

as there were only two blacks in the hat, he knows he must be white.'

'Oh, I see! I say, that's jolly clever. I must see if Harold can solve it.'

'But you *haven't* solved it. That was only supposing A and B were black, which they aren't. I gave you that as something to work on.'

'Well, I can't say that it's helped much.'

'I'll give you a clue, then. Put yourself in A's shoes and try to think what B is thinking.'

'Oh, this is simply stupid.'

'No, honestly, it does work. You see, A says "If I were black. . . .

'But we've done that before and you said we hadn't solved it.'

'It's not quite the same. A says, "If I were a black, B would see a black and white," Got that?'

'Yes, go on.'

'A continues speaking: "Now, B could conclude he must be white, otherwise C would have gone out to the governor long ago".'

'Why?'

'Because if B was black and A was black (which we supposed at the beginning), C would naturally conclude that he was white, as there were only two blacks in the hat. As C didn't go out, and A was a black, B knows he is a white.'

'So he goes out to tell the governor?'

'No, because it wasn't B who concluded that he was white; it was——'

'What *are* you talking about? You've just said, "B knows he is a white", and now you say——'

'It was A who was thinking for B.'

'Oh, yes of course. I forgot. Well?'

'Now, A says, "B could have concluded that he was a white and left the room. But B hasn't left the room, therefore he cannot see a black".'

'I think I'm going mad. Do you mean to say that if B *had* seen a black he'd have left the room?'

'Of course he would; because if he'd have seen a black disc on

Explaining to Elizabeth

A's back and there was also a black one on his own back, C would have gone out. But C *didn't* go out, therefore B must be a white.'

'Oh, I see! So as B couldn't see a black, A knew he must be a white, and so he went to the governor?'

'That's right.'

'Well, I always said these things were quite simple if you really thought hard.'

A. L.

THE BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO SKI-ING

The Nursery Slopes.—The nursery slopes at Trésportique (where you have come, of course) undulate mildly for a few hundred yards before making a very sudden and treacherously steep descent into the village cemetery. Beginners who are good enough to get that far without falling but who are not yet sufficiently skilful to stop or turn inevitably come to grief among the outlying tombs. Occasionally the more reckless penetrate the necropolis for considerable distance. There is still talk in the village of that impetuous rush of mine in my first winter that landed me at the foot of the grave of M. le Docteur Berthoud, where the rude forefathers of the hamlet lie at their thickest.

Now it might occur to you that the nursery slopes would be the easiest for a beginner. This is not so. The snow has been trodden into sheer ice by innumerable skis, luges, and, *horresco referens*, even skates. And in this glistening surface yawn deep fissures and vast shellhole-like cavities (each the scene of some colossal cropper when the snow was new) that give the place something of the weird desolation of a lunar landscape.

And moreover 'desolation' is a misleading word to use. The nursery slopes are generally as crowded as Oxford Street at Christmas-time. And if you fall there suddenly in the rush-hours you will probably be run over by several luges before being finally impaled on someone's skis.

No, the nursery slopes are no place for the nervous novice. Keep away from them for the first two years.

Stemming.—Your ordinary straight running will lack the easy

The Beginner's Guide to Ski-ing

confidence and carefree abandon it should have unless I first show you how to stem, which is the only legitimate way of applying the brake other than using complicated turns like the christiania or the telemark.

Here is a smooth easy slope. When you want to stop, which is of course as soon as you get going, thrust the heels of the skis wide apart, pressing them firmly on the inside edges. As you observe, this points the toes inwards. The skis converge, cross each other, tie your legs in a knot and throw you head-first over the tips with great violence. I am sorry I could not mention this little consequence at the beginning, but I was afraid that if I did you might have felt a little diffident about trying—I was right! There, I knew I was!

Now don't start struggling wildly to get up. You are just a confused tangle of limbs, skis and sticks which will need very careful sorting out. So lie still and think it out thoroughly before trying to move.

First spit out the snow. That's right. Never mind about your teeth just now; we'll look for them later. Swallowed them? Nonsense! that was probably some snow. Well now, let me see. You had better start by tracking down your left leg. It starts from the usual place, twists round your back and reappears over your left shoulder. The ski passes under your chin and apparently down your neck. No, the one with its toe in your mouth is your right ski, and that seems to be sprouting out of your ribs in some strange way. Your right arm? Where is it? Is that it there? No! Well, I'm very sorry, but you don't seem to have a right arm. Not just at present, anyhow. Are you sure you had one? Quite sure? All right, all right; there's no need to get short-tempered about it. After all, you still have your left arm, so you are an eye up on Nelson. Oh, yes, you are. The snow will come out of that one eventually, and when it thaws you will probably be able to see quite well with it again. Now unwrap that left arm gradually starting at the wrist. That's right. Can't get beyond the elbow? What's this pathetic-looking lump in the small of your back? Why, I do believe it's your right arm. I knew you were making a lot of unnecessary fuss. No, don't try to move it yet. It's wedged in between your sticks.

The Beginner's Guide to Ski-ing

You know, I'm just a little bit afraid you will have to surrender and unstrap your skis. Do that with your teeth. Oh, I'm sorry, I was forgetting about your teeth. Well, there's nothing else for it. You must yodel for help. What, can't yodel? You must learn, then. Come on, and I'll teach you. Shape the lips for the letter O and then tighten the muscles of the stomach as though you were going to be sick. . . .

Straight Running.—All that is needed is grace, ease and confidence. And now that you know about stemming you should develop these quickly. So get that haggard hunted look out of your eyes. Live only in the present. Brooding on the immediate future is morbid and has an adverse effect on your style.

And don't shout '*achtung!*' when you are coming. It sounds so silly when you never arrive.

J. B. E.

An American judge who was asked to ban a book recently pronounced that it was not obscene. The author is expected to appeal. (20.3.35.)

THE OUTLAW

With lagging steps I go in search of my charger. I find her on the far side of the band, quarrelling violently with the groom. She is a dirty-looking platinum blonde with a lurid bloodshot eye and a frozen sneer. The thought of having to wrestle with this brute for a fortnight sends my heart to my boots, but I manage to summon a smile as the groom introduces us. She stares gloomily at me as though her worst fears are realised. By some feminine or equine intuition she knows instantly that I am no horseman.

I ask the groom what sort of a horse she is and he tells me—in three words. This information makes me feel positively ill. If my groom has trouble with it what will happen to me! I have seen him reduce a cart-horse to tears in a kicking-match. Even his wife is afraid of him.

In an effort to establish friendly relations I present her with a

The Outlaw

handful of sugar. She responds by using me as a handkerchief and lashes out suddenly at the groom. He leaps to safety and advises me to mount while she is quiet.

I swing myself aboard and, turning her in the right direction, ask her with honeyed words to take me back to the battalion. To my surprise she obeys without a murmur, and the fact that the shortest route lies through the band worries her not at all. As we pile the musicians aside I gather from their remarks that they do not share the usual gentlemanly predilection for blondes.

We reach the front of my Company safely and, turning our backs on the troops, I call a halt, but without result. Like a more famous animal she goes on walking. I wheel her round and back we go. The subaltern in front of the leading platoon watches our approach with ever-increasing anxiety. Shoving my feet forward I throw all my weight on the reins, She takes no notice. With knee, heel and all the worst language I can think of I try to turn her again.

But it is no use. The heroic subaltern is swept aside and we pass through the Company, scattering the warriors right and left. When the last rank has closed behind us she stops and looks round at me with an evil leer. Goaded beyond endurance, I hand her the wallop she has been asking for. . . .

Some of those strange forms of life which are always to be found in the rear of an infantry battalion help me back to my feet, and one of them catches the horse. I replace the divots and remount.

The Adjutant canters up and we have a brisk liver-to-liver talk on idiocy. The grievance for some inexplicable reason appears to be his.

Once again we return to our proper place—backwards, it is true, but still we get there; and if we remain the wrong way round, what of it? We have hundreds of men to look at instead of one solitary Adjutant.

Suddenly she sneezes, and, finding my knee out of reach, she strolls languidly over to the band and blows her nose on the Drum-Major's ear. Beyond a rather vulgar remark, which I overlook under the circumstances, he emerges magnificently from an ordeal strong enough to rock a Guardsman.

The Outlaw

A wild howl from the Adjutant brings the battalion to attention, and my steed, amazed at the sudden rigidity of the troops, takes me back to see what it is all about. Another deafening howl, and the warriors slope arms. That does it. . . . This time, however, she gives me a sergeant to break my fall.

Again I remount, but she is excited now. Tremor after tremor passes through her bony frame. She stares wildly at the other horses and emits snorts of contempt. I can read her thoughts. She is wondering why inferior chargers are allowed to wear Colonels, Majors and Adjutants while she is given a second-rate Company-Commander with hands like a tram-driver.

Madly I haul at her as she begins to waltz towards the Colonel. But it is hopeless. Slowly but surely we approach and the Colonel's complexion becomes richer and richer as with one boiled eye on me he tries to move the battalion off. The Adjutant, breathing fire, slashes savagely at my blonde. To my consternation she counters with a slapping kick, and the Adjutant, giving an involuntary Wild West display, is eliminated from the proceedings.

The Colonel shouts at me. I can't hear what he is saying, but it doesn't matter—he will repeat it later on. Wildly I wrench at my raging blonde, and the Colonel's crop descending on her butt-end coincides with the discordant crash of the band's opening notes.

My steed decides to desert. We pass diagonally through the battalion, leaving behind us a trail of mutinous chaos. Flashing round the Sergeants' Mess we scatter a squad of signallers to the four winds and make for the open road. The sentry outside the Guard-tent, torn between duty and a desire to prolong his existence, brings off a marvellous salute during a backward somersault as we plunge past.

But nothing matters now; the blonde fiend can do her worst. Only a broken neck can save me from the wrath to come.

P. M. L.

Hautboys and Torches

HAUTBOYS AND TORCHES

Has anyone ever *heard* (or seen) hautboys and torches? This is no idle question. I really want to know. Because all my life I've been wanting to go to a play where they really had them and I never have. It's an odd thing too, because nowadays there seem to be at least three schools of thought about Elizabethan drama:

- (1) The back-curtain, cubes of wood and revolving-stage school.
- (2) The steel furniture and plus-fours school; and
- (3) The good old original school with kings and queens wearing crowns all proper.

Now at one time and another I have heard and seen very nearly every other Elizabethan stage direction carried out by one of these three. I have heard and seen alarums and excursions; the sound of a tucket is familiar to me; thunder and lightning are always provided. Producers seem to jump at the chance of 'Drums and colours. Enter Malcolm', and I have even seen creditable shots at that most disconcerting of all stage directions: 'Enter Ariel like a harpy; claps his wings upon the table; and, with a quaint device, the banquet vanishes.'

I must say, therefore, that if one is going to all the trouble of having a quaint device which makes a banquet vanish it seems a little silly to baulk at a hautboy or two and a few torches. After all, there are plenty of hautboys about, played by queer old men with whiskers, who'd be glad of a job. And there's a grand opportunity for the chromium plate and plus-fours school to use *electric* torches, which would be very, very advanced indeed.

I have several reasons for feeling like this about hautboys and torches. Firstly because they always sound such an extraordinarily attractive combination. I can't think of anything more eerie and dramatic than the sound of an hautboy (or boys) and the light of really flaring smoky torches (and nothing else, mind you. None of your Kleig lights). Secondly, the stage direction in itself is so cryptic. It doesn't tell you what the hautboys or the torches *do*. Do the hautboys just play a long sustained note or do they play a little tune in a minor key? And then again the torches. Held by people? Stuck up somewhere? One just doesn't know.

But the third reason seems to me the most important of the lot.

Hautboys and Torches

The Elizabethans were very nice about this matter of stage directions. They seem to have trusted the producer and the actor quite a lot. Look through one of their plays and compare it with the latest modern masterpiece, *Scarified Souls*. See the difference? When Shakespeare wants to begin *Hamlet* he puts: 'Elsinore. A platform before the castle. Francisco on guard. Enter to him Bernardo'. Just that. And then he brings *Bernardo* in and fires ahead. There is no messing about writing three pages of stage directions, telling us what time it was and how the furniture of the platform was arranged, and what colour *Bernardo's* hair was. Now if the author of *Scarified Souls* had been turned loose on that, he would have begun:

'It is hard upon midnight on the platform of the castle at Elsinore, the Danish capital. It is a clear starlight night in January, and the moon, which is just sinking beyond yon high eastern hill, touches with its last rays the steel helmet of a soldier who stands on guard, gazing out raptly into the darkness. One glance at Francisco shows us the soldier. The strong lined face . . .' and so on and so on, with a complete description of the man and the place, probably ending up, 'There is a grand piano left centre'. So, for the first four pages. He then probably continues:

Bernardo (agitatedly). Who's there?

Francisco (spinning round quickly and levelling his partisan). Nay, answer me. (*Threatening*). Stand and unfold yourself.

Bernardo (after a moment's hesitation). Long live the King!

(*It is the password. FRANCISCO, with a sigh of relief, slowly lowers his partisan and passes a hand over his forehead.*)

Francisco (more quietly). Bernardo!

Bernardo (nodding). He.

Francisco (fumbling in his pocket and producing a cigarette-case, from which he takes a cigarette and lights it, striking the match on the side of his boot). You come most carefully upon your hour.

Bernardo (glancing at his watch). 'Tis now struck twelve (*Clapping FRANCISCO on the shoulder*). Get thee to bed, Francisco.

[*He slightly emphasises the word 'thee'. His tone is the tone of a comrade who is at the same time a superior, if not in rank, then in intelligence.*]

Hautboys and Torches

—and so, as before, on.

Now of course this sort of thing doesn't *matter*. No producer or actor in his senses would dream of taking any notice of all this 'agitatedly' or 'lighting a cigarette' business which authors love so. As a matter of fact, if the thing were ever produced at all, they'd probably have *Bernardo* saying, 'Who's there?' not 'agitatedly' but 'calmly' or 'sarcastically', and, instead of having the grand piano left centre, they'd have a wireless-set right rear. But my point is this. We assume that the modern author puts all that in for fun. But we know that Shakespeare didn't *tend* to be superfluous with his stage directions. He kept them down to the barest essentials. And it's a fair bet that when he put 'hautboys and torches' he really *wanted* them. Hautboys and torches, *not* bombardons and bicycle-lamps. If he'd wanted barbardons and bicycle-lamps he'd have said so. But he *said* hautboys and torches, so why the dickens shouldn't he have them? They're cheap enough.

N. B.

SCANDINAVIA FROM WITHIN

I

Now that cruises to Norway and Sweden have started once more, now that Aurora Borealis is getting ready to welcome her fans, and the Scandinavian phrase-books are going into new editions, I feel the time is just ripe for me to publish these few little helpful notes for the information of intending visitors. Having last year spent every single day of two and a half weeks in either Norway or Sweden, I naturally consider myself pretty well qualified to write practically anything on the subject; indeed, if only I'd been able to stay on the extra half-week, I should probably have called these articles 'The Real Scandinavia' and thrown in Denmark as well. As it was, I slept all through Denmark and well out on to the other side.

Norway is the first country you hit if you leave England and go North-East. Don't put too much North in the glass, however, or you will merely strike Norway a glancing blow on the Tromsö and

Scandinavia from Within

pass harmlessly off into the Arctic Circle, ending up probably in Alaska *via* the back door or tradesmen's entrance. Not only, therefore, will your Norwegian phrase-book be quite useless to you, but you'll find the Eskimos, Alaskans, Ashcans and other inhabitants still in the middle of yesterday. This will probably upset you so badly that for the rest of your life you'll be trying to go to Saturday matinées on Sunday afternoon.

Assuming the boat is properly aimed from England, you should hit Norway at or about

Bergen

Bergen is called Bergen by the inhabitants, but the tourist agencies, in accordance with the rules of their union, cannot do anything so simple as that. Just as Copenhagen is to them the Athens of the North, Stockholm and Copenhagen again are both the Venice of the North, and Oslo is probably the Copenhagen of the North, so do they refer to Bergen as the Gateway of the Norwegian Fjords, or sometimes the Grimsby of the North.

The population of Bergen is about 350,000. This number is made up of 95,000 inhabitants and over a quarter-million fish. The better-class fish will be found in shop-windows in the main streets, but the majority occupy tanks and stalls in the market-place. The wretched condition under which these fish exist is seriously engaging the attention of the authorities. Probably the high proportion of live fish to the square mile has also something to do with the fact that it is perpetually raining in Bergen. Indeed, it is a well-known fact that the local horses shy if they meet a man not carrying an umbrella. The visitor, therefore, who happens to go out without one should remember this and not look upon the incident as a calculated insult on the part of a Norse horse.

The best view of Bergen is from the nearby Floien mountain (*ascenseur, restaurant, eau courante, chauffage central*, English spoken). On a clear day the whole town except the market-place can be seen stretched out beneath you. The market-place itself is invariably hidden by wreaths of low-lying fish.

Those tourists who are not fish-lovers rarely stay long in Bergen. They leave almost immediately by train, car, tram or on foot, push-

Scandinavia from Within

ing their belongings in front of them. Bergen and its environs are soon left behind; the smell of fish, however, generally lasts for twenty-five miles or so and sometimes—if you travel by train and keep the windows shut—you can carry particularly powerful samples with you right across the country to Oslo. Travellers are warned, however, that there is a tax on importing it into Sweden.

This brings us to

The Bergen-Oslo Railway

The Bergen-Oslo Railway is the usual method of egress from Bergen. This railway is a wonderful example not only of engineering but of nomenclature. It possesses a tunnel 17,500 feet long, and, among others, stations called Hop, Hol, Gol and Al. At a place called Roa farther along the line you can change if you like and go straight to Hell. Hell is the name of a junction up near Trondhjem. But it's better far to keep the ticket and bring it back to show the kids at home.

Other Communications

Once the traveller has left the railway he must proceed either by steamer or by car—'by fjord or by buick', as the Norwegians say. The fjord-steamers are built to navigate everywhere except up the steeper waterfalls; the motor-cars keep to the roads, except in exceptional and unforeseen circumstances.

Most of the main roads of Norway would break a snake's back and a monkey's heart, and since they are constructed for preference along the edges of precipices or cliffs overhanging lakes with but a bare synopsis of a parapet, they induce in the tourists occupying the back of the car an extremely thoughtful frame of mind, which amounts almost to religious fervour in the case of those in the outside seat. The Norwegian chauffeur, however, is only exhilarated by all this. The more dangerous the scenery the prouder he becomes of it; and the prouder he becomes the more he likes to point it out to his passengers. Between hairpin bends he will frequently turn right round in his seat to indicate a waterfall far above or an iridescent pool of oil on the shimmering surface of a lake far beneath. 'Foss—waterfall—good', he will comment upon the one with a smile. 'Automobil—tumble-plop—yesterday', he will explain the other,

Scandinavia from Within

with a merry laugh. The travellers will shut their eyes and he will turn back just in time to skid round the next corner. Afterwards the tourist will ask himself how it is that the Norwegian chauffeurs know so well just what a car will stand in the way of being swerved abruptly round three hundred-and-sixty degrees. The answer quite possibly is that they don't till it doesn't.

The native Norwegians themselves don't seem to notice anything unusual about their roads. A thing which has twenty-seven double hairpins, climbs three thousand feet and disappears into a glacier is a winding and undulating highway with many picturesque features; while what looks like the dry bed of a mountain torrent descending into the outskirts of a village at an angle of fifty degrees is merely the first side turning on the left past the hotel. Their ideas of distance seem on the generous side too, for a Norwegian mile is ten kilometres, or over six English miles. It used to be twelve kilometres a little while ago, but now is worth only ten. Something to do with our coming off the Gold Standard, no doubt.

This brings us to

Currency

The unit of currency is the *krone*. This is divided into 100 örer which, however, cannot be smelted down any further. In the better hotels and restaurants you can often change one of your *kroner* into two half-kroners—one to smoke and one to put behind the ear.

II

Peasants, Goats and Other Inhabitants

Most of the interior of Norway appears to the visitor to consist of a mountain plateau grooved by steep valleys. There is usually ice on the top of the plateau and water in the valleys. The Norwegian peasants and the Norwegian forests live somewhere in between the two. Both grow generally at an angle of seventy-five degrees, and if ever the peasants find a really flat piece of land they avoid walking across it from fear of getting giddy and falling down.

From the desolate icy mountain plateau, known as the 'vidda', the Norwegian peasant can wring very little in the way of a living. In fact he is rather off the whole idea of it, and there is a local saying in

Scandinavia from Within

many parts of Norway which can be roughly translated as 'Always beware of a vidda'.

The fjords and rivers at any rate provide him with fish, though his ideas are generous. If you see anyone in Norway excited over what you consider to be a big salmon, you will probably find it is really a trout; their big salmon have to be landed in special barges. Norwegian fishermen rarely tell fishing stories, as they are severely handicapped by not having a long enough arm-span to make it worth while beginning.

With ice above and fjord below the Norwegian peasant therefore has to concentrate on what he has got—or can take when the forests aren't looking. And he does concentrate. When he cuts his hay-crop he does it with a scythe first and then with a reaping-hook round the edges of the paths, and finally finishes off any overlooked tufts growing out of walls, round gate-posts, in between the potato-rows, etc., with a pair of scissors. He also grows a good armful or so on the roof of his house. Then he hangs it all up on a line to dry, like washing; and if you want to see him really angry, wait till a couple of sparrows setting up nest together come along and try to pinch a strand.

The peasants keep cows, chickens and innumerable goats. The cows live on what they can eat on the mountain-side in summer and on hay in the winter. The goats apparently eat rock and drink ice all the year round. The chickens have a hopeful disposition; they live on intensive scratching and an optimistic belief that some day something will turn up. The peasant lives on the cows, the chickens and

Goat-Cheese

When one considers that seventy per cent of Norway's area is barren and twenty-one per cent is forest, one wonders that the peasant lives at all. Probably he wouldn't were it not for goat-cheese.

No tourist can be in Norway longer than two hours without encountering goat-cheese, though it often takes him considerably longer than that to find out what it is. For the goat-cheese industry is one of Norway's principal manufactures. Day and night factories are turning out the big square brown blocks looking like something

Scandinavia from Within

between sunburnt stilton and chocolate that has gone pale under its tan. It is loaded on to barges and carried away to the towns, where they put some of it in shop-windows for tourists to buy, and build town-halls, post-offices and other municipal buildings with the rest. Occasionally even you find little cubes of it in the soap-dish of your hotel bedrooms, but that is probably a mistake. The Norwegian peasant, however, actually eats the stuff, as though his life weren't hard enough already. However, it is probably that which has made Norwegians pre-eminent in another profession: two out of every four Norwegian peasant lads leave home almost as soon as they can walk and join the mercantile marine, where they are called 'square-heads', and funnily enough don't seem to mind.

III

Language and Customs

The Norwegian Customs are pretty easy; they make but the most cursory examination of your luggage. The language, however, presents greater difficulties.

A Norwegian sentence written down seems to bear the same sort of humorous relationship to English that the phonetically written speech of a man with a heavy cold does to his normal remarks. The one is just as vaguely comprehensible by us who aren't Norwegians as the other is by those who haven't got heavy colds. Thus, a moment's reflection upon the apparently unintelligible words, 'Id's a dize bride boodlide dide!' and you gather that it is a comment upon the weather by the bad with a code. Similarly, when a Norwegian scribbles down the equally unintelligible words: '*Vil de gi mig deres hat og handsker?*' you pretty soon realise that he's saying, 'Will you give me your hat and handcovers?' A few minutes further deductive brain-work brings you to the conclusion that 'handcovers' are what we know in England as 'gloves', and you can reply quite fluently, 'Why?' or in Norwegian, '*Hvorfor?*' (Old English: 'Wha-for?')

Note.—Norwegians speak English about four times as well as English speak Norwegian; but as very few English speak Norwegian at all it doesn't lead to much. More particularly as the Norwegian,

Scandinavia from Within

when at grips with our tongue, has several distressing little faults, like saying 'ships' when he means 'sheep', and then balancing it out by saying 'sheep' when he means 'ship'. No farmer of whatever nationality likes to find that for some inexplicable reason someone has turned a fleet of trawlers on to his ten-acre field; while to a sailor the mere suggestion that he might see a couple of sheep in full sail on his port quarter would probably start something.

Norwegian Spelling

Where the Norwegian language seems really peculiar to English eyes is in the way in which it is spelt—more especially those words which apparently are pronounced the same as in English. To call an egg an 'egg' but spell it 'aeg' seems somehow to indicate that it isn't quite fresh, that it dates back to the days of Harald the Tuffaeg, Eggbald the Hairless and that lot. And that is nothing to what the Norwegian can do with other words, say a simple English noun like 'skirt'. As this looks practically Scandinavian already one would think he might just spell it 'skirt' and let it go at that—except that he'd probably then go and pronounce it 'shirt' and so get all tangled up on sex. But, coming of true hardy Northern stock, he is not going to take the easy way out. So the first thing he does is to get a 'j' in somewhere, which he injects up near the front, his theory being that a word always *looks* so much better if it begins with a good handful of consonants. Then because 'j' and 'i' are too closely related to be allowed side by side, he changes the 'i' to one of his own peculiar vowels—in this case 'ø', a kind of modified 'o', which to the uninitiated seems so far modified as to have been eliminated altogether as an afterthought. He next adds an 'e' at the end because, dammit, the word has only six letters so far, and so evolves 'skjørte'. Having achieved this result he not unnaturally calls it a day. One may add that there is very little difference between his ultimate pronunciation and the English word 'skirt'—except that the Englishman is considerably less tired.

The 'j' and 'k' complex

It will have been noted above that the first thing that happened to the word 'skirt' was that it got a 'j' put in it. That is because in

Scandinavia from Within

their spelling Norwegians suffer from a 'j' and 'k' complex. This unfortunate habit has so far got hold of them that they even have a special consonant of their own composed of the two letters together, namely, 'kj'. They have terrific fun with this; it is pronounced 'hg', and they *start* words with it. At most other times they simply cannot resist inserting indiscriminate 'k's' and 'j's' into the most unlikely words, and, worse still, in the most unlikely places. Their word for 'drink' is '*drikke*'; better still, 'no drink' is '*ikke drikke*', which sounds rather like the Gug-nunc password for next Saturday's outing.

The Swedes by the way are no mean performers in the 'k' class (a town in Sweden holds the record, I should imagine, by possessing nine letters, five of them 'k'—Kvikkjokk), but in the 'j' stakes the Norwegians are unbeatable. They can even take a gentle inoffensive word like 'milk' and make it 'mjolk'. It is this sort of thing, looking as it does rather like a Swiss yodeller with hiccups, that makes the student decide to give the whole djarn thjing up.

IV

Food and Drink

The old Norse idea of paradise was Valhalla, which seemed to be something like the Albert Hall turned into a chop-house (fully licensed) and run on continuous-performance lines, the signal for finishing lunch being the dressing-bell for dinner. Odin's handmaids the Valkyries, served at table, though, as there were only nine of them, no doubt outside help was frequently necessary. Of course conditions in modern Norway are slightly different.

The average Scandinavian meal of to-day has, however, retained one Viking characteristic. Neither in Norway nor in Sweden do you get much of it brought to you, you just go on a foray for it. Maybe one of the hotel Valkyries hands you, upon sitting down, a hot dish of fried eggs and giblets or a couple of steaks, something just to whet the appetite and get up your strength for the subsequent raid on the real meal; then you pick up your working plate, wave farewell to your neighbour and sail off to a central table, generally about the size of a barrack-square and covered with dishes, to bring back what

Scandinavia from Within

plunder you may. What exactly is in all the dishes only Norwegians know, unless it be a foreigner long settled in the country and with plenty of time on his hands; but most travellers will pretty soon acquire a rough general knowledge of what can safely be tackled. At least, those that don't will die of starvation.

There is of course in the centre the usual monolith of goat-cheese—the edible, not the washing or building kind. This cheese is called 'Gjetøst' (pronounced 'Gjetøst'), 'Gjet' being 'goat'—with a 'j' in it of course—and 'øst' 'cheese'. 'Øst', by the way, must not be confused with 'øster', meaning 'oyster' and also pronounced 'erster' (B.B.C.).

There are too on the table white bread, brown bread, black bread and some indeterminate half-breed and mulatto breads; besides some score bowls of stewed fruits, such as blackberries, blaeberries, blueberries, bilberries, whortleberries and huckleberry whins. Other recognisable dishes are beef, braised, pressed and otherwise ill-treated; ham, cooked, raw and half-trained; cold cutlets; and at breakfast, the roseate hues of early brawn. A whole section is then devoted to sausage, which is where the traveller generally begins to get out of his depth, since Scandinavian sausage varies from something as tasteless as vegetarian potted meat down to a thing that, properly handled, could drive an express train. And by the time he comes to the fish exhibits he is generally completely baffled, for Norway specialises in fish. The things that curers, smokers, canners and other fish-fixers can do to an innocent herring, anchovy and so on have to be tasted to be believed; but a fairly safe rule is that the smaller the fish or portion of fish laid out on the plate the more surprising it is to the palate. I once came across a tinful of tiny coiled things like watch-springs which had a taste that practically exploded in the mouth.

The only way, of course, of tackling the Norwegian non-stop variety repast is by trial and error. The first three-quarters of an hour of the meal, after of course the curtain-raiser of steak, can be pleasantly spent by trying all the dishes one after the other—even, if you like, making notes. Having then marked down what you prefer, you can get down to the proper business of having your

Scandinavia from Within

lunch and later to the surprising discovery that in Norway there is no afternoon. No time for it.

Another good thing about the Norwegian meal is that no one can tell how much you eat, unless of course you always sit in the same place and begin to wear a track in the carpet. They will then think pretty highly of you.

Wine, Beer, Spirits

Norwegians as a rule are not heavy drinkers, though they can knock back a pretty quart of milk with the evening meal. Beer is also favoured, though the Swedish habit of taking a little glass of the local schnapps or aquavit with it is not noticeable. In Sweden, of course, it is practically a rule—indeed if you try to drink a small glass of aquavit by itself and without having a bottle of beer as well you are looked on as pretty much of an old toper.

About wine in Norway there is really only one thing to remember, and that is the Norwegian name for it. It is '*vin*'; but the joke is that the word is pronounced '*veen*', not as a knowledge of French generally leads you to pronounce it. In that case you find yourself asking for '*vann*', and that, you realise when you get it, is Norwegian for 'water'. There is then only one of two things to do: (a) drink it with the air of a connoisseur, murmuring 'Ah! the '33 Vrangfoss'; or (b) search your phrase-book for the Norwegian for 'tooth brush' and pass the whole unhappy business off that way. This latter method, however, is not recommended, because a tooth brush, being one of the things one might *really* want to buy the moment one arrives in a foreign country, will not be found in any phrase-book.

Final Hints for Travellers

If going to North Norway in the summer, be sure to ask for a cheap day-trip ticket. The day in North Norway lasts three months.

A. A.

Little Fish

LITTLE FISH

'Rebecca and Phoebe!' announced Pamela. 'Darlings!'

The christening over, she sat down. A glass bowl containing two goldfish stood on our small table.

'Phoebe', Pamela said, 'is the one with the little black spot on her nose.'

I noted Phoebe's peculiarity.

'They're to have just a pinch of food every day,' Pamela continued, 'and when you change the water don't forget that you simply must leave it standing in the room first to get the right temperature. Otherwise the poor lambs will catch cold.'

I thought these remarks sinister. 'Are you hinting that the care and maintenance of your goldfish are to be my portion?' I inquired coldly.

'Only for a few days,' she assured me. 'I wish now I wasn't going; but I promised Aunt Milly I would as she's all alone. She's nervous.'

'Not so nervous as I am. What did you say about the water?'

Pamela repeated her instructions. She repeated them again before she left in the morning.

The tragedy was not my fault. I gave the fish their daily pinch of food. I kept water standing in the room for hours before offering it to them. They passed away early on the morning of Pamela's return. I rang the bell for Emily.

'Emily,' I said, 'you must go out at once and buy two goldfish.'

She looked at the empty bowl. 'One with a black spot on its nose, Sir?' she suggested.

I congratulated her and handed over a shilling. 'Hurry,' I added.

Emily hurried. She had just reported that the new goldfish were in the bowl when I heard Pamela's key in the door.

Pamela was gazing rapturously into the goldfish bowl when I entered the room. 'Whenever did it happen?' she asked gently.

I reassured myself. Emily had not failed me.

'When did what happen?' I asked airily.

Little Fish

Pamela spoke in an awed whisper. 'You must have noticed,' she said. 'Rebecca—Phoebe, but. . . .'

'But?'

Pamela almost blushed.

I looked in the bowl where three goldfish swam. I looked at Pamela, who was still marvelling at nature's handiwork. I rang the bell for Emily.

'Well, Sir,' she explained, 'you gave me a shilling, and as the goldfish were fourpence each, I thought I might as well get three.'

H. F. W.

Publishers are wondering what has become of one of a party of tourists who recently returned from Russia. It appears his manuscript has not yet been submitted. (24.7.35.)

POINT-TO-POINT

One of the penalties of youth is that one is constantly being forced to tell lies, whereas when one gets to Lady Mowl's age—a very round sixty—one takes great pride in being as truthful as decency and one's daughters permit.

Not that it makes much difference one way or the other, especially when one is staying with a woman like Muriel Broth. For Muriel is one of those charming vague people who, just because they are charming and vague, invariably get their way, however inconvenient it may be to others. There seems to be no method of coping with them, of pinning them down to anything. It is far easier to give in.

And this is why when Lady Mowl truthfully said that she detested point-to-points, and I lied and said that I loved them, it didn't make the slightest difference. We both had to go, and sat glaring at the dripping landscape out of two hermetically sealed cars.

'Because you *must*, darlings,' Muriel had said that morning; 'you *must* see my Robin ride.'

'Why?' asked Lady Mowl. 'I hate seeing people ride. And, any-

Point-to-Point

how, I shouldn't recognise your Robin on a horse because I can't even recognise him off one.'

'That's nonsense, darling,' smiled Muriel sweetly. 'You know you love point-to points. And all these young things,' she added, pointing to the junior members of the house-party, who were apprehensively huddled together, 'are dying to go. Aren't you?'

'Dying!' we answered.

Lady Mowl threw us a look full of reproach and we turned away ashamed.

'What race is the old chap riding in?' asked Eddie Prothero, nervously stroking his downy upper lip.

'The two o'clock,' replied Muriel.

'What time does it start?' asked Mary Bateson.

'And so of course we must take our luncheon,' continued Muriel, ignoring the interruption.

'What!' cried Lady Mowl, stabbing a cushion with her knitting-needle. 'Muriel, you're demented; I know you are! I've always said there was madness in your family, and now you've proved it! You know quite well that the course is only three miles away, so why in the name of fortune can't we eat a comfortable meal here at one?'

'Oh, well,' said Muriel vaguely, 'I don't know. It's much more fun on the course, isn't it?' she asked, turning again to us.

'Much,' we replied, with ill-simulated enthusiasm, averting our eyes from Lady Mowl's ravaged features.

And so at one o'clock in the pouring rain we packed into two large cars and drove somewhat funereally behind each other for three miles. In the middle of a very draughty field, at the far corner of which there were obvious signs of a race-meeting, we drew level, stopped and let down our befogged windows.

'We're here!' cried Muriel, putting her head out of the Rolls.

'So I imagined!' shouted back Lady Mowl from the Humber as she gloomily surveyed the distant bookies' dripping umbrellas. 'And now let's go home,' she urged.

'Oh, but I say,' squeaked Eddie in a muffled voice from the inside of the car, 'we can't go home before we've eaten something. And drunk,' he added as an afterthought.

Point-to-Point

'*And seen Robin ride,*' whispered Mary Bateson, who fancied herself in love with him. '*We must do that.*'

At this moment Robin himself appeared, wearing a strange bulbous crash helmet and a pair of paper boots. He looked wretchedly cold, and the rain dripped off the end of his nose.

'Have you placed your bets?' he asked, grinning with blue lips as he put his head through our window, 'because I think you ought to before you start eating. There won't be time afterwards. I'm seven to four on,' he added modestly.

'On what?' inquired Mary, gazing at him ecstatically.

Robin looked puzzled. 'I don't know *what* exactly, Mary,' he said. 'Anything you like, I suppose,' and he waved a mauve and nonchalant hand. 'Good-bye, all!' He smiled and turned on his heel.

'Darling!' screamed Muriel, almost falling out of the window, 'you *will* be careful, won't you? Drive frightfully cautiously and go slowly round the corners and everything, because you *know* how skiddy it is these days. For your old mother's sake,' she added, dissolving into tears.

'Oh, come, come!' said Eddie soothingly, 'you're not a bit of an old mother, Mrs. Broth. Not nearly so old as you look, I'm sure. You get your head back inside the car and I'll give you a mutton-pie.'

'*How* I hate mutton-pies!' sighed Lady Mowl.

It was a good luncheon as picnic luncheons go, but somewhat difficult to distribute. The salt, which was screwed up in a piece of paper, fell to earth almost immediately on its journey from the Humber to the Rolls; and the occupants of the former had a shrewd suspicion that the latter contained more jam-puffs than was fair.

'I've seen Muriel eat two herself!' cried Lady Mowl, outraged, and she beckoned to Eddie, who had got out to stretch his legs. He was now leaning, drenched and pathetic, against the radiator, sipping port out of a celluloid cup.

'Are there any more jam-puffs?' inquired Lady Mowl.

Eddie shook his head sorrowfully.

Point-to-Point

'No,' he said, 'but there are twelve beef-sandwiches and sixteen apples left over if you'd like them.'

'Isn't it very fuggy in here?' asked Mary suddenly. 'There seems to be such a smell of mackintosh or something.'

Lady Mowl snorted. 'Now, I suppose, you're going to tell me that you feel sick?'

'Well, yes,' whispered Mary unhappily, 'I am.'

We quickly opened every window and the weather came in with a rush. The bookies' raucous voices could only just be heard above the rattle of rain on the roof. Occasionally a few men in leggings staggered across the mud. Otherwise we appeared to be completely isolated.

'We're here', explained Muriel, putting her head out of the window again, 'because *that* is the last but one fence before home.' She pointed vaguely in a north-easterly direction. 'And if darling Robin is leading here he's bound to win.'

'But where, dearest Muriel—where is the fence?' asked Lady Mowl, balancing her lorgnettes on the bridge of her nose and peering into the mist. 'I see no fence.'

'Oh, well,' said Muriel irritably, 'it's somewhere about.'

At five minutes past two I remembered with horror that we had none of us placed a bet.

At ten minutes past two a prone figure was carried by on a stretcher. It was not Robin, but Mary felt sicker than ever, and we opened the roof of the car.

At two-fifteen Robin himself appeared, covered with mud.

'Good heavens, Robin!' cried his mother in anguished tones, 'are you badly hurt? What's happened?'

'I've won, that's all.'

'Won?' we screamed. 'Why didn't we see you?'

'I suppose because you still seem to be facing the wrong way,' laughed Robin.

'Well, I think your sense of humour is strangely warped,' retorted Lady Mowl, shutting one of the windows with a bang. 'And now for goodness' sake let's go home. Muriel!' she shouted, 'I wish to go home. This is perfectly beastly, and you know it. The girls here are longing to go.'

Point-to-Point

'Are you?' Muriel asked, opening the door of the car and thus precipitating a thermos flask into the mud.

Mary and I beamed starchily.

'Not in the least,' said Mary.

'Certainly not; it's the greatest fun,' said I.

'That's lucky,' grinned Eddie, 'for as a matter of fact we *can't*.'

'Why not?'

'Because the cars have sunk at least a foot into the ground.'

That finished Lady Mowl. She shut all the windows and her eyes, and never opened them again until two hours later when we were being dragged across the field by three cart-horses. Incidentally, these were the only horses we saw the whole afternoon.

'But I suppose there were some others,' sighed Lady Mowl at tea-time. 'Unless it was all a bad dream. I can't remember having hated anything so much for years, Muriel dear,' she added, taking a muffin.

'At any rate,' said Muriel, 'you saw Robin win the two-o'clock.'

'At seven to four on!' cried Mary proudly.

'Did I?' said Lady Mowl. 'I didn't recognise him without his horse.'

'But you said you wouldn't recognise him with it.'

'No, I shouldn't,' replied Lady Mowl pleasantly, taking another muffin.

V. G.

VERY MIXED DOUBLES

(*With acknowledgments to the B.B.C.*)

'... The number of that record is Columbaphone 70581. The time is now 2.14 and we are taking you over to Weltham, where Captain Falconer is going to give you a running commentary on the finals of the mixed doubles in the annual lawn-tennis tournament.'

'Good-afternoon-everyone. It's a lovely day down here. There are still a few minutes before the game starts, so I'll try to give you an idea of the court and its surroundings. From where I am sitting

Very Mixed Doubles

in the bathroom window I can get a good view of the court, which seems to be marked out in more or less the usual way, and about the right size. On my left there is a green-house with two or three panes of glass missing, and I can just see two bicycles inside it. Immediately opposite and about six inches beyond the outer tramline, there's a herbaceous border, and on my right a kitchen garden. Just below me there are several spectators—I can see D. L. Jones, the Singles Holder, the Reverend Arthur Simms, Mrs. Percy Betts and James Bing, who, by the way, is smoking a very strange-looking pipe. The match is between A. J. Smith and Miss Gladys Brown, and J. A. Robinson and Mrs. George Sharpe. The players are coming on to the court now—Robinson is carrying two rackets—his partner appears to be without one, so I suppose the second must be hers. Smith and Brown have won the toss and are serving from the green-house end. Miss Brown serves. Oh, lovely shot—an ace right down the centre line—fifteen-love. No, I'm wrong—it appears that Mrs. Sharpe wasn't ready. Miss Brown is to have two more. She serves. A fault. She serves again—Sharpe returns deep, right down the left-hand tramline—Smith—Robinson—oh, bad luck, Smith! Robinson played the shot off the wood of his racket, the ball only just went over the net and Smith, whose trouser-button had caught in the netting at the back of the court, was unable to move; very bad luck—love-fifteen. Brown serves from the left-hand side. A fault. She serves again. Robinson returns hard and high—out of court and into the next garden. Robinson must have mistimed that shot—fifteen-all. Brown serves again—a very fast service, but unfortunately the ball hit her partner on the back of his head and never reached the other side of the net—very hard luck! She serves again—oh, good service!—the ball pitched on the inner tramline and bounced into the herbaceous border so that Mrs. Sharpe was quite unable to get her racket to it—a very clever service. Thirty-fifteen. She serves from the left—oh, a very clever service!—the ball pitched on a bump and bounced right over Robinson's head. Brown serving brilliantly. Forty-fifteen. Robinson is wiping his face with a spotted handkerchief. Miss Brown serves from the right-hand court. A fault. She serves again—Sharpe returns down

Very Mixed Doubles

the centre—Smith—— Just a minute, there seems to be some confusion. Smith and Brown both went for the ball, which they somehow managed to get into their opponents' right-hand tramlines, and a slight argument is taking place as to whether the ball was hit twice. I'll open the window a little wider so that you can hear for yourselves.'

'(I didn't.' 'Yes, you did.' 'I tell you I didn't.' 'Oh, yes, you did.' 'I did not.')

'I hope you got that all right. Smith and Brown have won the point and the game, making the score one game to love—Smith and Brown leading in the first set. The players are changing ends now. Smith has stopped half-way and is mopping his forehead with a blue-and-white towel. I can still see the Vicar down there. Mrs. Percy Betts is knitting something mauve. Robinson and Sharpe are at the green-house end now, and it is Mrs. Sharpe's service. She serves—hold on a minute. Two dogs have appeared on the court and left it, each carrying a ball. All four players have followed them, but the dogs have a good start. Mrs. Betts is still knitting away down there. The players are coming on to the court again now to resume the game with only three balls, the other having been driven deep into the next garden. Mrs. Sharpe serves. A fault. She serves again—Brown returns—wait a minute; there seem to be two balls. Just as Mrs. Sharpe served for the second time the ball from the next garden was returned and pitched in the service-court, making it very confusing for Miss Brown, who mistimed her stroke and hit it back again into the next garden—very hard luck. Fifteen-love. Hulloo! the dogs are here again and have left the court with two more balls. The incident seems to have somewhat upset the players, who now have only one ball. I think they've decided to continue. Yes—they have. The score is fifteen-love, Smith and Brown leading by one game to love in the first set. Mrs. Sharpe serves from the left-hand court—a slow one. Smith returns—it seems to be coming this way and straight at the microphone. I think he must have mis——'
CRASH! BANG!

'We must apologise to listeners for the breakdown during our

Very Mixed Doubles

tennis broadcast. As there is still half an hour left before the next part of our programme begins, I shall put on some gramophone records. The first record is . . .'

G. B.

REFLECTIONS OF A MAN OF STRICT HONOUR ON BEING ABOUT TO EAT HIS HAT

It was silly of me, I know, to let myself in like that, and I expect people will laugh at me for it, but really there didn't seem to me to be the slightest risk. You know what it is at Whipsnade—the presence of animals breaks down every social barrier, and when the fat man with the yellow waistcoat suddenly remarked, 'As nice a specimen of Van Emden's Boar as I've seen for many a long day,' what could I do but put him right? I mean I couldn't go on letting him think it was a Van Emden's Boar when I knew it wasn't, could I? And I was perfectly certain about it, because when Father came back from *safari* in '97 he had a fine head which hung in the downstairs cloakroom until the moths got into it, and apart from the fact that it had left its body behind somewhere in Africa it might have been a twin brother to the one the fat man was pointing at. And how could I ever forget the little ivory label which hung under Father's head—I mean the one he shot—with

'TOLLEMACHE'S WARTHOG
Shot by Algernon Entwhistle
1897'

on it?

So I said, politely, naturally, 'Pardon me, Sir, but you are under a misapprehension as regards that creature. It is a Tollemache's Warthog.'

'No, it ain't,' the fat man replied, 'that there's a Van Emden's Boar.'

I admit I was unprepared, forgetting for the moment that the fat man had never been into our downstairs cloakroom, for contradiction.

Reflections of a Man about to Eat His Hat

Anyway, I said to him: 'If that creature, and I refer of course to the one with the mud on its snout, is not a Tollemache's Warthog, Sir, I'll eat my hat.'

'O.K.,' answered the fat man.

At that moment a keeper passed, and we referred the matter to him.

'Van Emden's Boar,' he grunted. 'Can't you read the plate on the cage?'

'I did,' said the fat man.

So there we were, and my dear Father must have been wrong too. The extraordinary thing was that the fat man tried to treat the whole affair as a joke and utterly refused to credit my intention of adhering to my bond. At last I drew myself up stiffly.

'We Entwhistles are men of honour, Sir,' I said, 'our word is sacred. Are you free to-morrow evening? We dine at seven-thirty.'

The fat man admitted he was.

'Very well then,' I told him. 'There's my card. I shall expect you at my house at that hour.' And I turned sharply away towards the wallabies and left him staring after me.

That's seven-thirty to-night. . . .

One thing I'm glad about, and that is I didn't mention any particular hat. I was so rattled by the fellow's impertinence that I might easily have said, 'If that isn't a Tollemache's Warthog, Sir, I'll eat my *opera-hat*,' and of course if I'd said that the future would be undeniably black, with all those springs and steel flippers and things. As it is I consider I can select any hat from my cupboard with a perfectly clear conscience, for they're all my hats—except that frightful brown thing which Herbert left last year, and anything less edible I can't imagine. . . .

As a matter of fact I've already had them all out for a sort of dinner-parade. The sight of my green tweed one with a dozen big sea-trout-flies stuck into it has raised a difficult point—or rather a dozen difficult points. Is it enough for me to consume a hat pure and simple, or am I in honour bound to wolf everything—band, lining, maker's name and, in the case of the green one, flies? On the whole

Reflections of a Man about to Eat His Hat

I think I can decently bar flies, but if once one has set out to demolish a hat then perhaps it is a bit pernicketty to fuss about bands and linings.

There's my old straw boater, yellowed with age and looking not altogether unappetising in a cereal sort of way. The doctors talk about nothing but roughage these days, and no one can deny that straw is exceedingly healthy stuff. With a little cream and sugar. . . .

Ah! that's a fundamental issue, isn't it? What about a little something to help the hat down? If it comes to that, what about cooking? Hang it, I didn't say, 'If that isn't a Tollemache's Warthog, Sir, I'll eat my hat *raw and without sauce*,' did I? No. Well, then, that opens up a very wide field. For instance, it might not be a bad notion to boil the old boater for a few hours to soften it and then fry it up with a strong cheese sauce. I wonder what's the right wine for a *Boater au Gratin*? Chablis, I expect; it always is Chablis, if you don't know.

Of course the old topper was bought in 1914, and it must be just about ripe by now. It might be the very basis for a slow casserole with plenty of mushrooms. . . . And there's the panama. It's never really fitted me. Why not invert it and let it be the mould for a steak-and-kidney pudding?

It's awfully hard to decide, isn't it? If only I hadn't so many hats! As a matter of fact there's a good deal to be said for the soft grey one I was wearing at Whipsnade; at least it's thin and isn't too fluffy. (It's fluff that may get me down.) Cut into strips and fried and dressed with breadcrumbs and anchovy it wouldn't be unlike the sole you get in railway dining-cars. . . .

Mind you, if I wasn't an Entwistle I daresay I'd have telephoned my hatters by now and got them to run something up out of rice-paper and icing-sugar. But there, I am an Entwistle.

And we Entwistles have always been famous for our digestions. My great-great-grandfather swallowed a cannon-ball in the Peninsular War and brought it home as a paper-weight. All the same, I wonder if it wouldn't be wise to ask the doctor in to dinner? I mean, a *whole* hat, like a *whole* lobster, sounds such a lot.

Well, but? I never said how long I'd take to eat the hat, did I?

Reflections of a Man about to Eat His Hat

I never said, 'If that isn't a Tollemache's Warthog, Sir, I'll consume my hat *within five minutes*.' Suppose I were just to take a nibble at every meal until the thing more or less wore out? Socially rather difficult perhaps: 'Will you excuse me, Mrs. Featherstonehaugh, if I cut out the soup and have another go at my hat? I've got it here, thank you.' No, that wouldn't do. . . .

After all, I think it'll have to be the new bowler done in a nice béchamel sauce with plenty of paprika stuffed into the brim. And just a suspicion of chive, I think. I must go and tell Cook. . . .

E. K. (*Eric*).

IMPOSSIBLE STORIES

THE THREE BROTHERS

Once upon a time there was a King who had three sons. Edmund, the eldest, was renowned for his good looks and ready wit, and the local nobility fell over each other to invite him to their dinner-parties. Wherever he went he left a trail of laughter behind him, some of it genuine and some not. For Edmund's tongue was as sharp as a gooseberry-tart, and witticisms flew from it like barbed arrows from a bow. Nevertheless, he was undoubtedly funny, and even those whom he had wounded found him irresistible.

Harold, the second son, was famous for his riddles. He would spend the whole day inventing such questions as, 'Why does a bee leave its mother?' or 'What is the difference between a slop-pail and a Bath-bun?' and then he would tear out his hair and chew his gloves to pieces trying to invent the answers. When at last he succeeded he would rush hysterically to the Court Chamberlain shouting, 'Quick! Quick! Get me asked out to dinner somewhere! I've thought of a marvellous riddle.'

The Court Chamberlain would rush to the telephone, the dowagers rush for their tiaras, and the cooks rush for their frying-pans. An immense banquet would ensue, and Harold, very hot and over-excited, would stand up and produce his gem—his pearl of a riddle. And how the table roared with laughter! Ah, he was a clever fellow,

Impossible Stories

was our Harold, there wasn't a shadow of doubt! He just tickled you in the right place, didn't he? How unlike his younger brother! they said, sighing deeply.

Poor James, he was a dull dog. He made no puns, he told no stories, he knew no riddles. When he spoke, which was rarely, he said perfectly ordinary things, such as 'West Bromwich Albion ought to win to-day', or 'Pass me the salt, please', or 'What a lot of weather we're having, aren't we?' and nobody, not even a *débutante* could think that amusing, could they?

Of course, one mustn't forget that James had his good points. He gave all that he had to the poor; he was fond of children, kind to dogs, and cared for all those in distress. Still, that didn't make up for his dreariness. I mean, one couldn't have a fellow like that to dinner, however worthy he might be. He would simply wreck the party.

One day the King called his three sons into his room.

'I have just heard', he said, 'that little Princess Melanie of Rubania has sunk into a melancholic torpor.'

'A what, father?' asked Edmund.

'She's got the pip, my boy,' replied the King, absent-mindedly plaiting his beard. 'She won't speak to anyone, and she won't smile. They've tried everything. They've taken her to a Test Match, they've read her the funniest works of Sir Walter Scott, and played her the most amusing bits of Sibelius. They've even taken her to a sherry-party; but she was not amused. The King, her father, has now in despair issued a decree saying that whoever makes his daughter laugh again shall wed her within the month.'

'Ah,' said Edmund.

'Um,' said Harold.

'Er,' said James.

'Now go, my boys,' said their father, finishing off his beard with a granny knot—'go and see what you can do. Edmund'—he turned to his eldest son—'you are renowned for your wit. Harold'—he touched his second son on the arm—'you are famed for your riddling. And James . . . ah, James!' sighed the old man, gazing raptly into his youngest child's putty-coloured face, 'you, my son,

Impossible Stories

must do your best!' With a sob, the King dismissed them, and mournfully started to unravel his beaver, which was now in a hopeless tangle.

The three young princes went out into the garden and talked things over.

'I believe Princess Melanie is as beautiful as the dawn on Mount Everest,' said Harold charmingly.

'Have you ever seen the dawn on Mount Everest?' asked James.

'No,' replied Harold crossly.

'I shall win, you know,' declared Edmund, looking at himself in the lily-pond, 'for I am good-looking as well as being amusing. I have grace as well as wit.'

'On the contrary, I shall win,' retorted Harold, 'for my riddles will first make the princess think, which is good for her torpor, and then they will make her laugh.'

'And I . . .', began James.

'You?' said his brothers, bursting into loud guffaws. 'Do you think that you will make the princess laugh?'

James nodded. 'I shall go down on my knees before her and tell her that I am poor and ugly and that I have nothing to offer her but a good man's love. When she sees that I mean it, she will spring up and run into my arms, laughing for joy because she has found a real man at last who offers her love and not words.' James paused, quite out of breath.

'Nonsense!' said Edmund, who hadn't really been listening. 'She will marry me.'

For weeks the young princes rehearsed their parts. They sharpened their wits on everybody they could see.

'Look,' said Edmund to a lady he was dancing with, 'is this one better? There was a man fishing by the river, and suddenly he saw a bowler hat come floating down the stream. As it drew level it was suddenly raised by a hand and a man's head popped out of the water. "Heavens!" cried the fisherman, "do you want help? Are you drowning?" "No, thanks, that's all right," said the man; "I'm on horseback!" That O.K.?' asked Edmund.

'Look,' said Harold to a dowager. 'What does a nought over the

Impossible Stories

letters V I D mean?—Woolworths! See? Nothing over sixpence!’

The dowager reeled.

‘Look,’ said James to his valet. ‘I love you. I’m ugly and I’m poor, but I’m good. I’m not amusing, I can’t tell funny stories or make puns, but when we’re married you’ll be so happy you’ll be laughing all the time.’

‘Very good, Your Highness,’ said the valet, ‘if a trifle fast.’

At last the great day arrived.

In an antechamber of the King of Rubania’s palace stood the three princes. Edmund, tall, pale and slim, was dressed in royal blue velvet trimmed with ermine’s tails and peacock’s feathers and mice’s paws. Harold was robed in scarlet and gold, with multicoloured ribbons hanging from his ears. James, alas! was attired in sober black bombazine, for he had given all his clothes to the poor.

At last the heavy gold doors were thrown open and the princes saw before them the wondrous Melanie, Princess of Rubania, sitting in a state of complete stodge on a throne in the middle of the room. She eyed them sorrowfully.

‘Ah,’ thought James humbly, ‘I dare not hope for such a prize. She will never look at poor dowdy me.’

How right he was!

Edmund, being the eldest, entered the throne-room first to try his luck; and he had only been there two minutes before those outside heard a wild shriek of laughter, followed by melodious gurglings, mirthful yelps, and girlish giggles.

The astonished brothers pushed open the door.

‘How did you do it?’ they asked Edmund, viewing the hilarious Melanie with dismay.

Edmund went and kissed his future bride on her dimpled cheek.

‘I tickled her,’ he said.

V. G.

Songs of Ignorance

SONGS OF IGNORANCE

COLOURS

(Written after studying several Autumn Stores' catalogues)

*Time was, when I was young and green,
My choice of words was slick,
I could describe the clothes I'd seen—
The spectrum did the trick:
A dress was either blue or red
Or something of the kind,
And so the drapers also said,
And no one seemed to mind.*

*But now whenas my Julia strides,
What colours does she wear?
And what adorns the season's brides?
Describe I do not dare!
For as each Autumn comes I note
Full many a novel hue
That was not found in Joseph's coat
And rainbow never knew.*

*Mere beige and puce were bad enough.
But when I'd mastered those
I rashly thought I 'knew my stuff';
But now my shutters close.
For Fashion draws from land and sea
Terms numerous and strange
Whose connotation is for me
Beyond conjecture's range.*

*One gown is Lizard, so they say;
Another one is Duck;
For all I know, Brown, yesterday,
To-morrow may be Muck.*

Songs of Ignorance

*I see no ending anywhere
To this most mystic code.
If Duck and Lizard deck the fair
Well, why not Frog and Toad?*

*Ah me, what mortal fears are mine
Lest this example spread!
For if a dress be Tuscan Wine,
Why not a lady's head?
If Spindleberry does for silk
And Cheese and Afric Moon
And Fish and Boue de Thames and Milk,
Will later poets croon:*

*'I sing her charms, for sing I must,
She's bowled me over quite.
Her hair is Botticelli Rust
Her eyes are Chinese Night.
The brightest Lido are her lips,
And when she smiles, beneath,
There breaks most lovely from eclipse
A row of Tango teeth.*

*Oh, who could paint her Bottle neck,
Her cheeks of Aubergine,
What poet would not wish to peck
Her ears of Runner Bean?
Her little feet peep in and out
In shoes of Eau-de-Vie,
And, for her hose of Barley Stout,
Oh, how it taketh me!'*

J. C. S.

A well-known composer is writing songs about film stars. We await with apprehension his 'Arless, Where Art Thou?' (30.10.35.)

Business for Pleasure

BUSINESS FOR PLEASURE

ON ORGANISING ONE'S TIME

'When in the chronicle of wasted time. . . .'—*Shakespeare*.

'If,' as Mr. Kipling has so beautifully said, 'you can fill the unforgiving minute With sixty seconds' worth of distance run, Yours is the earth and everything that's in it.' By a short calculation it will be seen that if any of us can contrive to fill the unforgiving minute with, say, 5 seconds' w.o.d.r., he will cash in on $5/60 \times$ the earth, which is enough for anybody. Even this, however, is not easy. Consider the following facts:—

(1) However willing one may be, it is only possible to work a certain number of hours in a day. All of us, I know, would be perfectly willing to make a start at six-thirty a.m. But what's the use? No one else will. It is useless to get to the office before eleven a.m. as none of the people you want will be in. In exactly the same way it is impossible to do business between twelve and three. Everybody is at lunch. After five everybody has gone home. And we all know that Friday is hopeless because everyone has gone away for the week-end, and Monday equally so because no one has yet returned.

(2) The keen business man must therefore resign himself to a short working week and seek to make up for it by the clever and intensive organisation of the time during which it is possible to get anything done.

(3) On the other hand this intensiveness must not be gained at the expense of Strain. It is useless to kill oneself by trying to do too much. One owes it to oneself, one's family and one's business to be sensible and keep fit and fresh.

Let us therefore try to make a short summary of the things which must and should occupy the time of the modern Managing Director:

(a) *Relaxation*. Above everything, he *must* have this. A Managing Director is only human. He cannot go on all the time.

(b) *Rest*. Modern forms of relaxation make subsequent rest absolutely imperative.

Business for Pleasure

(c) *Keeping in Touch with Things.* Necessary in the formulation of policy.

(d) *Social Contacts.* The firm's success may well depend on his skilful handling of these.

(e) *Thinking and Organising.* His major functions.

(f) *Managing and Directing.*

Between the hours of eleven and twelve, and three and five, then, on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, *room has to be found for every one of these vital tasks.* Quite clearly every modern resource, every trick of organisation will be necessary if the day is not to be hopelessly overcrowded.

Accordingly, let our Managing Director adopt the following hints:

(1) *He must be prepared to delegate responsibility.* He must have at least one able and energetic young assistant and a capable secretary to shoulder some of the burden. A man with vital issues to consider must not let himself become enmeshed in a tangle of detail. And when you come to think of it, practically everything *is* a detail.

(2) *He must accustom himself to a regular programme for each week, or even each day,* setting aside certain times for the fulfilment of certain definite tasks, e.g. 11-12: Read *Times*.

(3) *He must decide what hours he proposes to work and stick to them rigidly.* It is fatally easy to slip into the habit of staying on an extra ten minutes to finish an important letter. But the practice is the first step towards chronic overwork and nervous breakdown.

(4) *Periodically he must arrange to get right away from business altogether.* If he has organised his work properly it should be perfectly possible for him to be away for months or even years without making much difference. It is a fatal mistake to allow oneself to become indispensable.

(5) *Finally, he must realise that he is a busy man* and refuse to commit himself to meetings, conferences, interviews, writing letters and so on, which leave him no time to deal with his proper work.

Let us now proceed to work out a typical week for our Managing Director, endeavouring to preserve a nice balance between the various desiderata:

Business for Pleasure

Monday. Morning: Relaxation (golf).
Afternoon: Rest.

This leaves him quite fresh for the pressure of:

Tuesday. Morning, 11-11.30: Read correspondence.
11.30-12: Read *Times* (Keeping in Touch with Things).
12-3: Lunch.
3-3.30: See a man (Directing).
3.30-4: Tea (Rest).
4-4.30: See another man (Managing).
4.30-5: Think.

Wednesday. 11-12: Dictate letters.
12-3: Lunch.

3-5: Billiards at club (Social Contacts).

Thursday. 11-12: Ask someone what he's doing and tell him not to. (Organising).
12-3: Lunch.
3-4: See a man (Managing).
4-5: Think.

Friday.

Saturday.

Sunday.

} Relaxation, followed by Rest.

Now here is a week which is a model of organisation. Not a minute has been wasted, the tasks have followed one another in quick succession. But so skilfully have they been varied that our Director is likely to finish fresh and unjaded, with brain clear and keen. Only once, indeed, is there a semblance of poor arrangement—on Tuesday, when, with the sole break of half an hour for tea, Men are Seen solidly from three to four-thirty. But even so the energy stored up by the careful Relaxation and Rest of Monday will probably carry him through.

N. B.

Sunk without Trace

SUNK WITHOUT TRACE

Stars pricked frostily from the clear sky as Mr. Mohican, his footsteps ringing on the spangled pavement, strode along to the corner automatic machine to get some cigarettes. A wavering gaslight sent the shadows of a tree's bare twigs whipping to and fro across his path; and at long intervals—for it was late—there came the curt sound of a car flinging busily past the other end of the road. Mr. Mohican, with his hands deep in his pockets, whistled through his teeth to keep himself warm, but found the device inadequate.

Late as it was, two men stood talking by the automatic machine when he got there. Both of them he knew by sight. One had a local reputation as a retired seafaring man; in the other, a small stocky figure in a bowler hat, Mr. Mohican recognised a ratepayer to whom he always nodded when they met in the street for fear that otherwise he would stop and start a conversation.

As Mr. Mohican approached, the ratepayer was saying something about a scandal, staring up at the windows above the shop outside which the machine stood. The retired seafaring man, chewing with the languid persistence of a camel, paused for a moment to announce: 'There ain't nobody lives there, mister. That's a store-room.'

He then watched without apparent interest as Mr. Mohican began to put a sixpence into the machine. But the ratepayer, suddenly noticing, ejaculated, 'Don't do that!'

'It's all right,' Mr. Mohican said mildly, withdrawing his sixpence nevertheless. 'If there's nothing in it you get your coin back.'

'Ha!' said the ratepayer. 'Do you?'

'You've lost yours?'

'Swallowed up, mister,' explained the retired seafaring man, 'like by the ocean. Reminds me of what I said to the Cap'n one day in mid Atlantic when ninety-eight dozen bookshelves full of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* broke loose and fell off a corner of the poop. "Cap'n," I said . . .'

'He bears your loss with equanimity,' said Mr. Mohican to the ratepayer.

Sunk without Trace

'Yes,' the ratepayer bitterly agreed, adding to the retired seafaring man: 'Suppose it was your sixpence? Suppose you'd been robbed of sixpence and left without cigarettes as well?'

'Fags are no good to me, mister. I chew.'

'Tobacco?'

'Ah. It's my delight on a shiny night,' said the retired seafaring man, 'in the season of the year.'

'Shiny but cold,' said Mr. Mohican, shivering.

The other explained that he was waiting for his first mate to get to sleep before he went home, and this was as warm a spot as any. 'This here'—he rested his hand on the machine with affection—'may be out of order, but it keeps the wind off.'

'It may keep the wind off,' said the ratepayer, 'but it's out of order.'

'Smart,' conceded the retired seafaring man—'very smart. Reminds me of the way I told the Cap'n off in the Roaring Forties. "Cully," he says to me as he was boring for oil on the seventeenth deck, "these are the Roaring Forties." "You don't say," I says. "Well," I goes on, "they may be Forties, but they don't half roar." I never see a man so took aback.'

Forgetting he was cold and bowing to his curiosity, Mr. Mohican asked, 'What was your ship?'

'My ship was the *Pneumonia*,' said the retired seafaring man proudly. 'Fifty-two million tons out of Plymouth Hoe yacht basin, jewelled in every ventilator and not a lifeboat without its street of shops. Solid gold davits and a couple o' dozen funnels you could see your face in. Shiver my acetylene-welded rivets! but you oughta seen her beatin' round the Cape of Good Hope in a stiff breeze, every bath-towel set and a hundred-and-twelve thousand men puttin' up a skyscraper in the hold.'

The ratepayer was in no mood to listen to these reminiscences.

'First thing to-morrow morning,' he declared, striking the pavement with his umbrella, 'I shall come to this shop and demand from the proprietor the sixpence of which I have been robbed—*robbed*, I shall say, by his so-called automatic machine.'

The retired seafaring man began to clap.

Sunk without Trace

'That's the tack, mister!' he cried. 'Give it to him straight, like I did many a time to the Cap'n.'

'I will,' said the ratepayer sternly, and with a wave of his umbrella he walked briskly off.

'That's the type of man this country needs more of,' declared the retired seafaring man with enthusiasm, watching his retreating back. 'The kind of man that stands up for his rights. There are two kinds of men this country needs more of, mister: one's the kind like him, and the other's the kind that'll never split on a pal. Am I right?'

'I daresay you are,' replied Mr. Mohican, in the grip of a strange fascination.

'Never was I righter, even when I had that argument with the Cap'n time we was becalmed in the doldrums and fourteen of the ship's massed bands was playing that fine old sea-shanty, "What Shall We Do with the Drunken Elevator-Attendant!" "Cap'n," I says, "what we need is a capful." "What we need is half a gale," says he. "What we need is a capful, Cap'n," says I, "and I don't care who hears me say so." "You can let the Marines hear you say so," says he, "and I hope it chokes 'em." "Cap'n," says I—but that's neither here nor there. The point is this country needs more of the kind of feller that'll never split on a pal. Now I can see at a glance that you're that kind of feller. Am I right?'

'Well. . . .'

'I knew it,' said the retired seafaring man.

He brought a large knife out of his pocket and opened it with a sharp click.

'Silent as the grave, mister, that's you,' he declared happily, and, pausing only to stick the blade of his knife in the 'rejected coins' hole of the machine, pull out a small wad of tobacco and pocket the six-pence that rattled after it, he strode nautically away.

R. M.

Muffs are reported to be coming back. And to a moth, of course, a muff is as good as a feast. (10.12.35.)

Our Office

OUR OFFICE

The other day Mr. Harbottle, who is the head of our office, saw in *The Times* that there was a Business Efficiency Exhibition on at Olympia, and he told Mr. Porter that it would be a good idea if he went along and had a look at it. But nothing ever came of it, because just as Mr. Porter had got his coat on Mr. Harbottle happened to notice the date on *The Times*. Afterwards, when we were talking about it, we decided that there wouldn't have been much point in it if he had gone. Because, although we are a small office, we know quite as much about efficiency as most big businesses.

Perhaps you would like to hear some of our ideas. I have arranged them alphabetically because we always do this to everything we can in our office. It is more efficient.

Approach to Office.

An ingenious method. Imagine that someone comes to see us—call him X. We have a front door and two bells, one above our name-plate and one below. X may choose either of these, for they both ring in the cupboard under the stairs where we keep the stationery and tea-cups. After a few minutes X will try the front door and find that it opens easily. Entering the hall, X treads on the loose floorboard and Sidney, the office-boy, hears the creak and hurries out. Sidney shows X into a little room with 'Private' on the glass door and goes back to the general office. This glass door has a double purpose. Every time Sydney goes by it he will see X, and this will remind him that he must go up and tell Mr. Harbottle some time that someone has called; and Mr. Harbottle himself can then come and walk past it and decide whether he likes the look of X.

Correspondence, Method of Dealing with.

Sidney does the post and Padgett helps him. At 5.15 Sidney goes round with a waste-paper basket and collects the letters. Then he puts them on his table in a row, with the gummy part upwards, and rubs a damp sponge over them. By the time he had finished the last one the first is too dry to stick, and so he licks it. Then he licks all the others. Padgett takes the letters and sorts them into two piles

Our Office

—English and foreign. Sidney takes them back and sorts them into 'London & Abroad' and 'Country'. By now Padgett has added up the number of stamps needed and torn them out of the stamp-book, and he starts sticking them on while Sidney tears out what he thinks is the number of stamps needed. Padgett sticks twopence-halfpennies on a few 'Country' letters and goes home, leaving Sidney to finish.

Erasing, Means of.

Or, Rubber on String. How this clever idea came about is an interesting story. Miss Elkington, one of our typists, was always losing her rubber, which, being circular, used to roll away under the filing cabinet. But one day she noticed that there was a hole through the middle of this rubber, and so she tied it on to a piece of string and tied the string to the space-bar of her typewriter. Miss Elkington then found that the string was just too short for the rubber to reach the paper, and so now she borrows Miss Lunn's.

Filing.

We lost the key of Miss Elkington's cabinet about a year ago, and so we started to use the cupboard in the general office. Soon this got so full—it was pretty full already—that no one liked to open it in case everything fell out. So now we keep all our papers in the wire trays on Sidney's table.

Pencils.

We have two of these. The one with a point is Sidney's. The silver one without a point is Mr. Chudleigh's, and we all stir our tea with it.

Stenography.

Miss Elkington and Miss Lunn are very efficient girls. They both type, and Miss Elkington knows shorthand. Mr. Harbottle dictates too fast for her to use it much, but anyhow she finds it better to write in longhand because Miss Lunn can help her to read it back afterwards.

Tea.

We have a Tea Fund. On Monday we put our sixpences in the tobacco-tin on the mantelpiece. We take it in turn to bring cake, and on Thursday evening we get the sixpences back again to pay our bus fares home.

Our Office

Telephones.

(a) *External.* We have a switchboard and several extensions into other rooms. Each peg on the switchboard has a name over it which corresponds with the name on the door of the room the telephone extension is in. This name in turn indicates who was in the room up to last March, when we all changed round. Thus: Mr. Harbottle is Mr. Chudleigh on the switchboard, Mr. Porter is Typists, and so on.

(b) *Internal.* We have a house-telephone as well as a speaking-tube. The speaking-tube goes from the general office to Mr. Harbottle's room. (It was chiefly to get this that Mr. Harbottle had all the rooms changed.) Sidney blows up the tube and the whistle falls out at the other end. Mr. Harbottle puts it back and sits down again. Sidney rings him up on the house-telephone. Mr. Harbottle tells him to wait until he has shut the back window, because Sidney's voice carries up the area outside when he is telephoning and makes it difficult to hear. To shut the window Mr. Harbottle has a very neat device—a long pole with a hook on the end. He has to get this hook through the loop at the top of the window and push it up. By the time he has done this Sydney will have come upstairs to give the message.

Touches of Comfort, Little.

Mr. Harbottle has a cushion on his chair. He throws it into a corner in the morning, and in the evening Mrs. Biggs, who does the cleaning, shakes the dust off it and puts it back. Besides this there are two mirrors, one in the typists' room and one in Mr. Porter's. Mr. Porter's is four feet from the ground and the typists' is seven.

Wants, Indication of.

I have put this under 'W' because it is our most important example of efficiency, and I felt that it should go at the end. The trade name for it is the Djinndicator, and this is how it works. Mr. Harbottle has a dozen little bell-pushes on his wall, each with a message by it—'Cigarettes', 'Do not Disturb', 'Show Visitor Up', and so on, arranged alphabetically. When he wants anything he presses one of the bells and a flap with a corresponding message on it falls down on the board hanging by Sidney's table. The flap on each side falls

Our Office

down too. It will make it easier if we imagine a visitor in Mr. Harbottle's room—call him Y. Mr. Harbottle asks him to stay to tea. Y thanks him and says that he will. Mr. Harbottle presses the bell marked 'Tea', drawing Y's attention to the efficiency of this scheme as he does so. Five minutes later the whistle falls out of the speaking-tube. Mr. Harbottle puts it back and goes on talking to Y. A little later the telephone rings. Mr. Harbottle picks up the receiver, puts it down and goes over to the window with the boat-hook. Sidney knocks at the door and put his head round to say that he has ordered the taxi. After thinking for a moment, Y picks up his hat and goes off. Then Mr. Harbottle asks Sidney to fetch him his tea.

Yes, that's the sort of office we are. Of course, there are a lot of things I haven't told you about. But I think I have said enough to show you that, though we are small, we do know something about efficiency.

A. M.

THE 'UMMING-SLOOTH

Mr. Silvertop, whose value to a household as handyman cannot be assessed in the jewels of the Inds, was fitting a new lighting-plug in my study.

'Branching out on a new line of business, I am,' he remarked suddenly, more to the plug than to me.

'Surely your bow's over-strung already?' I said. 'What are you going to be?'

'Um-ming-slooth,' he replied mysteriously.

'What?'

'Um-ming-slooth,' he repeated, his face grave. 'It's a rum sort of a go as a job but I seem to 'ave a natural bend for it. Come about like this: Last week a lady rang me up and complained as 'ow she was being driven barmy by a narsty 'umming in the 'ouse, and for the life of 'er she couldn't spot the cause of it.

'When I goes round she comes running into the 'all and cries, "There it is!" I listens very 'ard but I couldn't 'ear a sound. "That's funny," she ses; "no more can I. It's just like it to stop soon as you

The 'Um-ming-Slooth

come." "Well, stopped it 'as, Mum," I ses. "You let me know when it starts again." "Don't you dare go!" she cries. "I promised my 'usband I wouldn't lose sight of you till you'd mended whatever it is. You 'ang about on the landing, that's the best place to 'ear it." "All right, Mum," I ses, accommodating-like, and does.

'Well, after a couple of hours and not a smell of an 'um I gets sick of 'anging about and I goes and taps on 'er door and asks if I can go for a bite of dinner. "Certainly not," she ses, "you might miss a deal of 'um-ming. Tell you what, though, I'll 'ave lunch and an armchair sent up to the landing for you." "Mind if I smoke, Mum?" I asks. "You can stand on your 'ead if it 'elps you to swipe that ruddy 'um-ming," she ses, or words to that effect. You could see it 'ad been getting on 'er nerves proper.

'Now I'd been thinking pretty 'ard about 'um-ming sounds while I was waiting, and I'd remembered 'ow my old Dad woke up one morning and wanted to know what the perishing R.A.F. was doing in the garden, and 'ow it took us 'arf the day convincing 'im it must all be 'appening inside 'is own 'ead. So I ses to the lady, diplomackic-like, "What's your 'usband think of the 'um-ming?" But when she answers, "'E's going fair silly with it", I know it's a real case of 'um-ming, and not like my old Dad was.

'Being an 'um-ming-slooth 'as its cushy side, I will say. An 'ousemaid brings me a deck-chair and a nice bit of dinner and the papers, and I settles down there like 'Aile Selassie 'imself. Afterwards I was 'aving a snooze when the lady comes dashing upstairs proper excited. "Did you 'ear it that time?" she asks. "Can't say I did, Mum," I answers, rubbing my eyes; "there was a lorry passing." "Never mind, it may come again in a minute," she ses; "and look 'ere—it's my belief it's something in the water-pipes. 're's an old stetherscope of my 'usband's; you go down to the kitchen and sound the boiler.'

'She being one of them imperial ladies, I does as she ses, but you can guess what a mug I feels listening-in to the pipes like as if I was the Pride of 'Arley-street, and the maids all saying, "Ninety-nine". Not a touch of bronchitis could I find 'in the 'ole of the central-'eating. After tea, back I goes to my deck-chair and starts

The 'Umming-Slooth

in on a murder-story the Cook give me. Every now and then the lady come up and ses, "It's bound to begin soon," but I 'ave my doubts, and apart from a thirst—by this time I 'ad one you could step on, but being new to the profeshun I 'ardly liked to ask for any of that, though they 'ad some in the kitchen—I wasn't lodging no complaints. It was a nice book.

'Well, about eight, just as the detective was 'aving a narsty time with the pet leopard in the spy's boodoor, the 'umming started and no mistake. Corlumme! I jumped up as if I'd been pole-axed. It was a funny sort of 'umming, it seemed to come from all over the shop at once and it was one of them 'ummings you couldn't pin down no'ow. I goes downstairs and I goes upstairs, I puts the blinking stetherscope to the water-pipes and the gas-pipes and the grandfather clock, but no luck. All the time the lady was raging about something cruel.

'Then suddenly I 'ad a notion—an 'unch, if you like. I slipped out and knocked at the 'ouse next door. A lady comes to the door.

'“Ever want any expert advice about that electric-machine of yours?” I asks.

'“What electric machine?” she demands.

'“You know, Mum,” I ses.

'“Oh, you mean the new German gadget my 'usband's trying for the pain in 'is leg?”

'“That's it,” I ses. “I 'ope you'll pardon the liberty, Mum, but if you've got a room on the other side of the 'ouse I should advise your 'usband in confidence to take 'is machine in there. It may be what the doctor ordered for a pain in the leg, but I 'ave good reason to know it's giving the lady this side a pain in the neck.” So she thanks me and I goes back and tells the lady I've mended an air-lock in the geyser.'

Mr. Silvertop put in the last screw with undiminished gravity.

'That was exceedingly tactful of you,' I said. 'But what about the wretched people on the other side?'

'They 'appen to be clients of mine,' he replied, picking up his tools. 'They've just asked me to step round to-morrow to trace a queer 'umming noise in their water-pipes.'

E. K. (*Eric*).

Interview with Gaffer

A cannibal chief is reported to have eaten his mother-in-law, father-in-law and two sisters-in-law. Living on his wife's relations, as it were. (27. 5. 36.)

INTERVIEW WITH GAFFER

'Can you tell me the way to Sluncombe?'

The aged gentleman sitting on the stile glanced up, took his short clay pipe out of his mouth, spat shrewdly and put his pipe back again, but otherwise gave no indication of having heard my question. I came a little closer.

'Can you tell me how to get to Sluncombe, please?' I repeated.

Still he made no sign. I went right up to him and, putting my mouth within three inches of what I took to be his ear, addressed him again.

'I want to go to Sluncombe,' I roared. 'SLUNCOMBE. S for Stupid, L for Lumbering, U for—U for . . .'

'I've 'eerd a many questions in my time,' said the old man suddenly, turning upon me a look of such extreme displeasure that I instinctively leapt back a couple of paces; 'ah, many an' many's the question I've 'ad put to me one way or t'other since the day I were born, an' never a one on 'em was any the better for bein' spoke over and over agin. Leastways,' he added, with crushing deliberation, 'not as *I* knows on.'

'I'm sorry,' I said humbly. 'I thought you didn't hear me the first time.'

He seemed genuinely surprised.

'Didn't 'eer you?' he repeated. 'An' why shouldn't I 'eer you? 'Tis quiet enough 'ere, an't it?'

I looked back at the little path I had come along and the peaceful fields on either side.

'Very quiet indeed,' I admitted. 'But you see I—well, as a matter of fact I thought you might be just the slightest bit dea—— That is to say, I wondered whether perhaps . . .'

The old man had taken his pipe out of his mouth and was staring at me in obvious bewilderment.

Interview with Gaffer

'Deaf?' he said. 'Me deaf? I an't never been deaf in all me life. You arst anyone you likes, they'll tell 'ee the same. Toothache I've 'ad, and 'whiles I've 'ad doctor in along o' me knees an' me stum-mick, but I've kep' me ears to meself an' they an't none the worse for it neether. I kin 'eer me own shadow, time I'm walkin'. You look arter yer own ears, young fellermelad, an' I'll look arter mine.'

He pulled at his pipe for a moment and then a thought seemed to strike him and he began to chuckle.

'So that's what you was a-hollerin' for, like an insterical wum-man? I reckoned you was a mad chap—barmy-like, see?—bein' you couldn't talk natural an' quiet. Well, I be danged! Wotever med you think I were a deaf 'un?'

I explained with what dignity I could that his failure to answer my question promptly naturally led me to suppose he was rather hard of hearing. But it was obvious that the old man had never listened to such nonsense.

'Owesomever kin I answer 'ee straight off,' he began, with the air of one who reasons with an unusually backward child, 'when I don' know wot 'ee be goin' to arst me afore I 'eers 'ee speak? I got to 'ave time to think, an't I? I'm sittin' 'ere with me clay pipe, resting me bones on this old stile, an' first I knows about it there's summon a-arstin' me 'ow 'e gotter go over to Slunkum. "'Ullo," I ses to meself, "'ere's another o' these 'ere dratted young fellermelads lorst 'is way," I ses. "Dunno 'oo 'e is. Dunno where 'e come from. An' wants to go to Slunkum. Wot's 'e want to go to Slunkum *for*?" I arsts meself. "'Tis a tidy way to Slunkum," I thinks to meself; "and then agin tidn't so far neether—not fur a young 'un," I thinks. "Not that 'e'll get nuthin' for 'is pains, not when 'e do get to Slunkum," I thinks; "so wot do 'e want to get to Slunkum *for*, that's wot I want to know? 'Owsomever," I ses to meself, "if so be as 'e do want to get to Slunkum," I ses—an' you a-bellerin' an' a-screamin' in me ear'ole, mind, so's I kin 'ardly foller meself think—"if so be as 'e *do* want to get to Slunkum," I ses to meself, "why, then, let 'im go to Slunkum, and be danged to 'im!" I ses.'

'You don't think much of Sluncombe then?' I put in mildly.

'Well, if 'e an't the 'astiest chap ever I see!' observed the old man

Interview with Gaffer

to his pipe. 'Never set eyes on me afore in 'is life, an' first 'e makes out I be deaf an' then 'e tells me I 'ates me own birthplace. Wotever will 'e . . . ?'

'If you were born at Sluncombe,' I said rather impatiently, 'I should have thought you could tell me how to get there without all this trouble.'

'If I knowed what 'ee wanted to go to Slunkum *for*, mebbe I could tell 'ee 'ow to get there. It arl depends. There be Upper Slunkum an' there be Middle Slunkum an' there be Little Slunkum. Leastways there were, but they be arl Slunkum now.'

As a matter of fact I had seen Sluncombe on the map and thought it would be a good place to walk to from my hotel. But if I were to try to explain to this old fool that I merely wanted to walk there so as to be able to walk back again, I knew that his last doubts about my sanity would go. So on the spur of the moment I said that I wanted to see the church.

The information afforded the old man the utmost delight.

'An't never been a church at Slunkum, not in my time,' he chuckled. 'You'll 'ave to go over to Marblesham, bein' you're set on a church. An' if so be as you wants to get to Marblesham . . .'

'I know,' I said. 'If so be as I wants to get to Marblesham, why, then, let me go to Marblesham and be danged to me, you say. But, as it happens, I don't want to go to Marblesham; I want to go to Sluncombe. And if I can't see the church I shall see something else. I shall probably see the oldest inhabitant.'

'That you won't,' he said confidently.

'Why not?'

' 'Cause 'e's dead.'

'Oh,' I said, somewhat dashed. 'Then perhaps I shall be permitted to see the next oldest. Or is he dead too?'

'No, 'e an't dead neether. But it an't no manner o' use your goin' to Slunkum to see *im*—not to-day, any'ow. An' I'll tell 'ee for why: 'cause 'e 'appens to be sittin' on this 'ere stile at this very minit a-talkin' to a young mad chap wot thinks 'e's deaf and don't like 'is own birthplace. An' there y'are.'

'I see,' I said, 'So it looks as if I needn't go to Sluncombe after all?'

Interview with Gaffer

'Not if you wants to see the secon' oldest in'abitant, you needn't. Because I be the secon' oldest in'abitant o' Slunkum, an' if so be as you wants to see me, why, 'ere I be. But wot I arsts meself is, wot do 'ee want to see the secon' oldest in'abitant o' Slunkum *for*?'

'I don't,' I said bitterly. 'I'm cured.'

H. F. E.

MR. PORTER DOES THE FILING

Mr. Chudleigh pushed his pile of books through the door, steered it across the room and dropped it heavily on the table by the window

'My own room's impossible to work in,' he said, sitting down and spreading the books out in front of him, 'what with some infernal workman hammering somewhere overhead and bits of plaster falling off the ceiling.'

Sidney, taking all this to be a hint, banged his rubber stamp twice more and stopped. For perhaps a minute we sat in an eerie silence. Then there was a clattering outside and the door burst open. It was Mr. Porter.

'I want some work,' he began.

Mr. Chudleigh looked at him. His lips moved.

'All right,' Mr. Porter went on. 'It isn't my idea. I was perfectly happy upstairs till old Harbottle told me to go and do something useful.'

'Fourpence and carry nineteen,' said Mr. Chudleigh, writing it on his blotting-paper. 'Now you leave that chair alone. It's all right as it is.'

'I wasn't going to mend it,' said Mr. Porter, putting it down opposite Mr. Chudleigh. 'I'm going to file those papers in Sidney's tray. Mr. Harbottle's suggestion,' he explained as he sat down and emptied the tray over the table.

Mr. Chudleigh brushed one of the papers off his sleeve and went on with his adding.

'What do I do now?' Mr. Porter asked Sidney. 'I'm never certain what it means when you say you file a thing.'

'You'd better just put them alphabetically, Mr. Porter,' said

Mr. Porter does the Filing

Sidney. 'You see, you take the name of the person the letter's from, Mr. Porter. First A, you see. . . .'

'And then B. I know,' said Mr. Porter. 'Well, that's easy enough. I shall put all the papers in a tidy heap and grasp them in the left hand. Then with the other—or right—hand I shall take each letter, bill or what-not out in alphabetical order. What a lot of bills, by the way. Months old, too.'

Mr. Chudleigh started violently.

'Sorry,' Mr. Porter said. 'I was wrong. Receipts. They've got things stuck on at the bottom.'

Mr. Chudleigh said nothing, but it was obvious that he had lost his place and was beginning again at the top of the column.

'No,' said Mr. Porter indistinctly. He was holding several letters in his teeth. 'This is not the way. I haven't got anything like enough fingers.' He shuffled all the papers together again. 'Now, this is what I shall do. I shall still grasp them in the left hand, but I shall deal them out into different heaps. One for A—there. One for K—about there, I should think. Hulloo! Here's someone called Smith Hastings. What shall I do about that?'

'It's perfectly simple,' said Mr. Chudleigh. 'In a case where a name is a double name with a hyphen one counts it as beginning with the first letter of the first name.'

'But there isn't a hyphen and it's just printed across the top of the paper, so that it might be two people, Smith and Hastings, or it might be just one man called Hastings whose Christian name was Smith. Though that's not likely. Or it might be. . . .'

'I suppose it hasn't occurred to you to look at the signature?' said Mr. Chudleigh.

'I thought of that,' Mr. Porter said. 'But I can't read it.'

Mr. Chudleigh ran his finger round his collar. 'Sidney,' he said, 'this room is totally airless. Please open the window at the top.'

Sidney fetched the boat-hook to pull the window down. 'Sorry, Mr. Chudleigh,' he said as he knocked some of the books on to the floor with the other end of the pole.

Mr. Chudleigh found his place again. There was a silence.

'Snap!' shouted Mr. Porter.

Mr. Porter does the Filing

Mr. Chudleigh jumped and knocked another book off the table.

'Sorry,' said Mr. Porter, 'But I've just got another Appleton. Three's my record so far. Three Joneses. I . . . ' he stopped suddenly.

Mr. Chudleigh looked up. 'What are you staring at me for?'

'I'm not staring at you,' Mr. Porter answered. 'I'm gazing into the middle distance and wondering whether I'm going to sneeze or not.'

Mr. Chudleigh stood up and shut the window with a jerk.

'I'm not,' said Mr. Porter.

'Not what?'

'Not going to sneeze. I couldn't let you know sooner, or I'd have told you not to bother about the window.' And he stood up and opened it again.

'Another Jones,' he went on, picking up his papers. 'Two at Potters Bar and two at Basingstoke. Do you know, until I was fourteen I thought Basingstoke was in Lincolnshire.'

Mr. Chudleigh put his pen down. 'This is too much,' he said. 'Are you suggesting that Basingstoke is in Lincolnshire?'

'I didn't say that. I said I used to think it was. I know perfectly well it's in Hants. Why, you can't move anywhere in Hampshire without hitting up against Basingstoke. I was only mentioning it because it was rather funny that right up till when I was fourteen . . . '

Mr. Chudleigh clutched his hair. 'It may strike you as still funnier to hear that I'm just starting to add up this column yet again. This time I was at the bottom line but one. If you think of anything else funny, let me know.'

There was another silence.

'Here's something else funny,' said Mr. Porter. 'Here's a letter beginning "Dear Mr. *Hatbottle*".'

Mr. Chudleigh stood up. 'Why do you think I came in here?' he asked.

'I was wondering,' said Mr. Porter. 'I mean, if you wanted to be *quiet*, why come in here? Why not stay in your own room?'

'Because there was someone making a deafening noise with a hammer exactly over my head.'

Mr. Porter does the Filing

'Could you hear it too?' asked Mr. Porter. 'Old Harbottle said it deafened *him*. That's why he suggested I should do the filing. I was fixing a floorboard.'

Mr. Chudleigh collected his books into a pile, steered himself across the room and opened the door. There was a sudden gust of wind.

'Oh, well,' said Mr. Porter, collecting his papers from the floor and stuffing them back into the tray, 'I was getting rather sick of filing, anyway. I don't suppose Harbottle would mind if I went upstairs again and finished that floorboard.'

A. M.

'Men who drink too much should be treated by a physician,' says a magistrate. Men who drink too much don't care who treats them. (17.6.36.)

THE LEER OF PÈRE JUNOT

The leer of Père Junot has for ninety-six years been the most remarkable feature of Saisou—that is, if he wore it in his cradle, which seems reasonably likely when you regard the hideous face of his great-grandson. Were Saisou big enough for such fame, the entry in *Michelin* would read thus:

'SAISOU (*Chose*). 357 *h.* (All of them, says Père Junot bitterly, liars of an imposing magnitude.) *Circulation difficile tous les jours.* (When you have driven through, you massage your backbone and know why.) *Voir: L'œillade de Père Junot.*'

If M. Michelin will fix a suitable remuneration, I am prepared to reveal the whereabouts of Saisou. All the world will then rush to see this celebrated leer, and the 357 *h.* will make their 357 fortunes.

The leer of Père Junot used to come out strong, I am told, when he was ticking people off, but in the course of over ninety years the 357 *h.* were ticked off so often that they became callous. The leer is now only provoked by reminiscences of the past. Père Junot's memory is as elastic as those of most men of his age. It usually goes

The Leer of Père Junot

back to Louis Philippe, but it has been known to stretch to Waterloo. Thus, when M. le Curé in 1914 spoke admiringly of the Cossacks, Père Junot leered. The Cossacks who rode into Paris in 1815, he explained, were prodigious.

François is a frequent victim of the leer. François (eleven, and quick at figures) is the partner of his father, who keeps the Hotel du Monde and deputes to him the touting branch. He steps on to the running-board of your car as you bump over the stones, and holds forth on the virtues of his father's cooking. If you had a hand to spare you would shove him off, but he knows the paving is too bad for that, and so gets a good innings. His father is very pleased with the touting, but Père Junot is not. He does not insinuate that the touting lacks verve, *élan*, or inspiration. He justs leers and observes that under the third Napoleon the touting was entirely phenomenal. François goes fishing sometimes, and he says Père Junot has told him that prior to 1871 not only were the fish magnificent but even the worms were surprising.

A nephew of M. le Curé came to see him last month on short leave. He is an understrapper in a cavalry regiment, and his bright blue toggery and clinking spurs set male and female of Saisou by the ears. The women adored him, the men secretly admired him. All but Père Junot. He shook his head sadly, leered, and remarked that in his young days the military were incomparable. Pressed for details, he added that they were marvellously corseted. They say the young military would have tried this experiment in allure but his leave was up next day.

The paving of Saisou is of a kind which should be laid down on our blackest bits of road. To it Père Junot and many others of the 357 *h.* owe their longevity. Speed-limits are unnecessary and accidents never happen. It consists mainly of holes, with little holes between them. Occasionally there is a large round stone like a Neanderthal skull, but that is just to give you a bump up instead of a bump down. Of course, if you live in Saisou you realise that this is as it should be, because you can thumb your nose at the wickedest of manslaughterers; but visitors have been heard to complain. Such a one was rebuked by Père Junot. (Leer.) The paving now, said

The Leer of Père Junot

Père Junot, was a bagatelle. 'Under Louis Philippe, monsieur, it was sinister.' (Ministry of Transport, let us have some sinister paving on the Great West Road.)

The trousers of Père Junot might be called another feature of Saisou. They are grotesque, fantastic, terrible, like the Notre Dame gargoyles. The tradition is that he bought them in 1857 from a Crimean veteran, who had debagged the oldest inhabitant of Constantinople to obtain them. The date is fixed with precision, because Père Junot, being told by an English visitor (female) that his trousers were a disgrace, replied simply, albeit with a leer: 'In 1857, madame, these trousers were spectacular.'

But his best adjective was reserved for the distinguishing characteristic of Saisou. The Rue Carnot, as the visitor's nose informs him, is bounded on the north by two mixens and on the south by three mixens; and if you don't know what a mixen is you can go to Saisou and find out. It is the most mixenish village in a superbly mixenish Department. One year an artist ventured up the Rue Carnot and retired hastily. 'Père Junot,' he said angrily, '*ça pue!*' The old man drew himself up from the semi-circular to the scythe-blade shape. 'Monsieur,' he said with a dramatic leer, 'in the time of the Second Empire the smell of the Rue Carnot was stupendous.'

W. G.

THE BOGCHESTER CHRONICLES

THE NIGHTINGALE IN SNUFFLER WOOD

'The wonders of Nature are not really *meant* for the lower orders.'

With this well-chosen phrase Mrs. Gloop sums up the discussion we have been having as we drive through the calm evening air towards Snuffler Wood. How many people are there to-day, Sir George asks, who would be prepared to risk a chill by sitting up in a damp wood merely on the chance of hearing the nightingale? Very few, I have to admit. The old love of Nature is passing, says Mrs. Gloop, and its place has been taken by the lure of unhealthy and

The Bogchester Chronicles

overheated cinemas. The lower orders would be far better off, she asserts, if they spent their evenings in the open listening to the nightingale.

Nevertheless there is some hope left for England when such people as ourselves show that we at least can still enjoy the simple pleasures of the countryside. And now, following the report of Mrs. Gloop's agent, Mr. Todd, that the nightingale has been heard in Snuffler Wood, we are on our way there this evening to pass a lonely vigil listening for the bird ourselves.

SOME SUPPORT FROM THE PUBLIC

But when we reach the wood it becomes clear that our vigil is to be less lonely than we had supposed. The strip of waste ground in front is already beginning to look like the car-park at a race-meeting. About a dozen charabancs, most of them labelled 'Nightingale Special', are drawn up on one quarter of it; and on the rest a constant stream of cars is being shepherded into position under the inexperienced guidance of Joe Cronk, Mrs. Gloop's keeper. A cycling club, some fifty strong, is dismounting as we arrive.

From the wood itself there come signs that a good many nature-lovers are already concealed there. Parties of them can be heard crashing about through the undergrowth; two or three gramophones are beguiling the tedium of waiting for the nightingale; a portable wireless-set is giving out the weather report. Every now and then some of the watchers break into a rousing chorus to keep their spirits up.

At this point we are joined by Mr. Todd, the light of enthusiasm shining in his face. He tells us that during the last few days he has been writing letters to all the principal newspapers to say that the nightingale has been heard in Snuffler Wood. And this, he says modestly, is the result. Three pounds ten has already been taken at the car-park, and many more cars are still arriving; everyone he has been able to catch has had to pay a shilling entrance to the wood; and he is charging a commission on the sale of ice-creams and hot coffee from the various stalls which have been set up in the wood. The whole takings are to be devoted to the local branch of the Save

The Bogchester Chronicles

the Countryside Society, of which Mr. Todd is the enthusiastic secretary.

'Really, Mr. Todd,' says Mrs. Gloop reproachfully, 'I think I might have been consulted before you undertook all this.'

'I felt that was unnecessary,' says Mr. Todd earnestly, 'knowing that you too have the interests of the Save the Countryside Society at heart. I was sure that you would welcome such a splendid chance of helping to preserve the rural charm of our district.'

MINOR DISTURBANCES

But at this moment his explanations are cut short by a tremendous uproar from the wood. Apparently one of the coffee-stalls has been overturned by the struggling crowds. Not only has this caused a loud and acrimonious argument, but now one of the secundus stoves has set alight the wood itself. Fortunately there are many feet to stamp out the blaze and little damage is done. However, purely as a precaution, Mr. Todd goes off to telephone to the Bogchester Fire Brigade to stand by, and to ask for a large body of police reinforcements to be held in readiness. We then settle down to listen for the nightingale which—so Mr. Todd says—should be starting to sing at almost any minute now.

One thing at least is certain; there will be no fear of us missing it when it does start. We had been afraid that it might pour out its song on the far side of the wood without us knowing anything about it. Now, however, every tree and shrub conceals its party of watchers, and the slightest sign of wild life is instantly reported by a score of voices. At the same time, it is true that most of the wild life seems to have temporarily deserted the wood.

However, as we step quietly over the fence, Sir George treads almost on top of a pheasant cowering in the undergrowth. It goes rocketing out through the trees with a noise like a factory-whistle.

Instantly the wood re-echoes with shouts for assistance. Word is passed round that the nightingale has been flushed and is now attempting to escape. Large numbers of watchers come crashing frantically towards us and an ill-organised effort is made to throw a cordon round the wood and head the bird off. I do my best to

The Bogchester Chronicles

explain that a nightingale is an entirely different sort of bird, and at length order is restored.

AN UNPLEASANT SCENE

Half an hour passes, and gradually a new note creeps into the shouts which sound from time to time through the wood.

'It's all a swindle,' cries a voice from somewhere near at hand.

'There ain't no nightingale at all,' cries another.

'We've been done.'

'We want our money back.'

The cry is taken up. All at once the wood becomes alive with purposeful figures streaming back towards the car-park, all calling out for their entrance fee to be returned.

It looks as though an unpleasant scene is about to take place. We hurry out of the wood to discover that Mr. Todd has already been surrounded by a menacing crowd.

One of the members of the cycling club has evidently been appointed as the spokesman. 'You said we got to pay a bob to hear the nightingale, didn't you?' he demands threateningly.

'Certainly I did,' replies Mr. Todd in a cold manner.

'Well, there ain't no nightingale. Wot yer going to do about it?'

'I don't see that there is anything for me to do about it.'

'Ho! don't yer? We come all the way out here 'stead of staying at home and going to the picters, and when we get here there's nothing doing. If we'd gone to the picters and there hadn't been no show we'd 'a got our money back, wouldn't we? Well, we want our money back now, see?'

A loud murmur from the crowd shows that they are of the same opinion. Mr. Todd turns his harassed face towards us.

'I really think I shall have to give them their money back,' he whispers despairingly; 'I am afraid there may be trouble otherwise.'

'Certainly not!' says Mrs. Gloop. 'This was all your idea, Mr. Todd, and I expect you to carry it through. We are going home now.'

Mr. Todd turns and attempts once more to argue with the crowd; but it is useless. 'We're not going home without our money back,'

The Bogchester Chronicles

says the leader; 'that's flat. And what's more, no one else ain't going home neither.'

EDUCATION, NOT PROFIT

It seems that he is right. All this time the crowd has been gradually swelling and it now overflows on to the road. It is obviously quite impossible for anyone to get away, the night air is getting colder and we are growing a little tired of the nightingale. 'Give them all their money back,' cries Mrs. Gloop with an expansive gesture. A cheer breaks out and there is a frenzied rush towards Mr. Todd.

Unfortunately it is soon clear that a good many of the watchers never paid their entrance fee at all. Everyone seems to regard it as a point of honour to receive a shilling back before he goes, and in a very short time all Mr. Todd's takings have disappeared, while the crowd around him is still clamouring for more. In the end he is compelled to ask the coffee-stall merchants for his share of their profits; but it becomes clear that the Save the Countryside Society is going to be left with a debit balance as a result of to-night's proceedings.

Nevertheless—as Mr. Todd points out—we have at least succeeded in instilling in the townspeople of the district a love for the simple pleasures of the country.

H. W. M.

If all the portable wireless-sets and gramophones in London were placed end to end along the beach at Brighton—it would be Sunday.
(29.7.36.)

MISS PELLOW

Miss Pellow

Is art-y

And craft-y,

In Culture immersed

Miss Pellow

*And goes in for djibbahs
And necklets
Of amber (which burst),
For hand-painted tea-trays
And Medici prints,
For busts of Beethoven,
And curtains of chintz,
For pewter-work, knick-knacks,
And hand-woven skirts,
For lino-cuts, lamp-shades
And peasant-dyed shirts,
For leather-craft sandals,
And footstools,
And statuettes after the Greek,
For pottery,
Poetry,
And spinning,
For nuts
And batique.*

*Miss Pellow is art-y
And craft-y.
Miss Pellow is rather
Intense.
Miss Pellow will play
On the 'cello
If given the slightest
Pretence.
Yet we like to take tea
With Miss Pellow—
Though she WILL wear a djibbah
Of yellow—
When scandal is due for
A show-down
And expressions are pursed:
For Miss Pellow is art-y and craft-y*

Miss Pellow

*And in Culture immersed,
But in questions of scandal
You can't hold a candle
To Miss Pellow for getting
The low-down
AND GETTING IT FIRST!*

R. C. S.

THE HOLD-UP

'Talking of bandits,' said Mr. Peach, 'did I ever tell you about the time I was in a hold-up?'

'Well, I—(Has anybody any tobacco? My pouch is in my blue suit. Thanks.)—I was living in Detroit at the time and a great friend of mine was a clerk in a drug-store there. Man by the name of Sims, Bill Sims. I was working nights and—(Got any matches? Thanks.)—I was working nights, and often when I'd had all the sleep I wanted I used to stroll around to his store and sit behind the counter and spend an hour or so yarning with him. I used to sit on a low box, so that when customers came in they wouldn't see me—that might have been bad for business. Then, when Bill had served 'em, we carried on our talk from where we left off.

'Well, one day business was pretty slack. There hadn't been a customer in the store for fifteen minutes, and Bill and I were talking away to beat the band. Then we heard the door open, so I shut up as usual, and the customer came up to the counter. The first words he said were "Stick 'em up!" and I saw Bill's arms go up over his head. I didn't need telling to keep quiet—I was just frozen stiff. Then the man said, "O.K., brother; hand over all the cash you've got and make it snappy; I've left my engine running. And no monkey business!"

'Bill pulled open the drawer in the cash register and took out some money. "Here you are," he said, "five dollars and fifteen cents." This didn't seem to please the bandit at all, and he said so in several remarkable words. "That's all there is," said Bill. "If you don't believe me, come round and see for yourself."

The Hold-Up

'Now I knew darned well Bill would have a lot more than five dollars in that till, so when he invited the bandit to step around to our side of the counter it didn't take much figuring out to know what he was after. The little alleyways leading from the front to the back of the counter was just up against where I was sitting, so that as soon as the bandit got behind the counter he'd find me sitting there. I didn't relish the idea one bit, but I guessed Bill must be expecting me to take a hand, so before the bandit came round the corner I took a quick look round and picked up a syphon of soda-water as being the nearest and handiest weapon. The instant the bandit came into view, his gun still aimed at Bill, I let fly with the soda-water straight at his eyes.

'Well, Sir, you'd have seen one highly surprised bandit; if I hadn't been so scared I'd have laughed. He may have been all right facing machine-guns and revolvers, but when it came to soda-water he just couldn't take it. Before he'd time to think, he took a step back, put his hand up to his eyes and dropped his gun; and Bill dove for it in a flash. Inside of two seconds he was on his feet again covering the bandit with his own gun, and there was no more need for me to play soda-water on him like a fireman putting out a blaze.

'“Stick 'em up, brother,” said Bill, “and no monkey business.” And, believe me, the brother stuck 'em up right away. “Now”, says Bill, “you wanted a hold-up and you're going to get one. Only I'm going to hold you up. Lock the door, Peachy, and then go through his pockets.” I did, taking great care to keep on the leeward side of the bandit, not knowing what kind of a marksman Bill was. I found another gun, which I put in my own pocket, forty-five dollars in bills, and some loose silver.

'“Five dollars and fifteen cents is the store's anyhow,” says Bill. “How much is there left after that?” “Forty dollars and fifty cents,” I told him. “O.K.,” says Bill, “then we'll start, Brother,” he says to the bandit in his smoothest behind-the-counter voice; “you won't find better value in the whole of Detroit, or Chicago, or New York for that matter, than you'll find right here in this little drug-store. We have a fine line of toiletries, patent medicines,

The Hold-Up

cigars and cigarettes, newspapers, candies and soft drinks. And you're going to buy forty dollars and fifty cents' worth. I'm paid on a commission basis here, and it's not every day I serve a forty-dollar customer. You keep him covered with the gun you found in his pocket, Peachy, and I'll practise the Art of Salesmanship."

"How about asking your customer to sit down?" I said. "You surely don't keep 'em standing behind the counter while you load 'em up with forty dollars' worth of merchandise?"

"Certainly not," said Bill, and he flashed a bright smile at the bandit. "Won't you sit down, Sir?" he says. "You'll find a chair on the other side of the counter."

"I wish I could remember all the bandit said; a lot of the words were new to me. But we understood clearly enough that he was refusing Bill's kind offer of a chair. So I started walking towards him with the revolver pointed at his chest, and at every step I took he took one backwards, and after some careful navigating on my part and some helpful instructions from Bill we eventually landed him on a chair.

"Now," said Bill, "suppose we start at the top and work downward. Your hair, Sir—allow me to remove your cap. My dear Sir—dandruff! How very fortunate you should happen to call here! I have in this store the only thing in the world that will permanently cure dandruff," and he took a couple of bottles off the counter "Here you are, Sir, forty-nine cents and ninety-five cents, and the ninety-five cents contains three times as much as the forty-nine cents. You'll take the ninety-five cents? Thank you, Sir. You'll never regret it. And now, Sir, what about toothbrushes and toothpaste?"

"And so Bill went on, selling him a new razor, shaving cream, shaving brush, after-shave lotion, after-shave talcum-powder, blade-stropper, cough-drops and so on, right down to a bandage for varicose veins and a box of corn-plasters.

"I don't want to horn in on something that's none of my business," I says to Bill when he'd sold the corn-plasters and showed signs of starting in on cigars and cigarettes, "and I don't profess to know anything about the Art of Salesmanship, but

The Hold-Up

aren't you kind of getting carried away?" "What do you mean?" asked Bill. "Well," I says, "in the pure and blissful joy of an artist practising his art, haven't you forgotten the poor guy's only got forty bucks?"

"Corks!" says Bill, and he came down to earth with a thump. "You're right," he says, after counting up, "our brother here has spent fifty-two dollars. I'm sorry, Sir," he says to the bandit in a very severe tone of voice, "but business in this store is on a strictly cash basis. In no other way could we afford to offer our customers such amazing low prices." And he put back in their places a hot-water bottle, and an expensive manicure set and three jars of bath salts. "Now," he says, "let's count up again."

"This time it came to forty dollars and twenty-five cents, and Bill started looking around for something worth twenty-five cents to make up the right amount.

"I'm sorry to butt in again," I says, "and it's none of my business, as I said before, but how much is a syphon of soda-water?"

"Corks!" says Bill again. "I'd forgotten all about that. Thank you, Peachy. A syphon of soda-water is fifty cents, with twenty-five cents returned on the empty syphon. Did our brother here return the empty syphon?"

"Well," I says, "he never really had it. He seemed more than satisfied with the soda-water alone."

"O.K., then," says Bill, "we'll allow him the twenty-five cents. That makes it exactly forty dollars and fifty cents. I'm sorry," he says to the bandit, "that the extremely small margin of profit upon which we work does not allow us to give our customers any discount, but I can assure you that nowhere, at least not for the next few years, will you get better value than you have in this store this afternoon. And now, Sir, you must allow me to call you a taxi. No, Sir, we simply won't hear of your using your own car. We always insist on providing free transportation for such valued customers as yourself."

'And with that he phoned for the police.'

S. G. B.

We Return from Manœuvres

A recent exhibition of pottery included a section devoted to designs on china. It is somewhat significant that most of them were Japanese. (12.9.36.)

WE RETURN FROM MANŒUVRES

Our battalion has just finished a strenuous week's manœuvres, during which we have been buzzed about hither and yon at every whim of Somebody Very Senior. Now that we have arrived safely back in Havershot Barracks we are busy swapping experiences and congratulating ourselves on coming through without having been decimated or indeed having suffered a single casualty; except Private Sling, who has got 168 hours' detention for firing a blank cartridge at an umpire's horse. The Colonel was inclined to treat it as a mere ebullition of playful spirits till he elicited the fact that the blank had a lead-pencil in front of it.

Our Lieutenant Holster, it would appear, had about as good a time during the week as any of us. For he and his platoon of merry men were detached as a sort of guard to a special water-supply unit, which, in order to give a verisimilitude of real war, had to wander around testing and reporting on various sources of water. Theoretically most important, but actually, in civilised England with Company's water nearly everywhere, rather a sinecure. Indeed, Holster says the unit seemed to spend most of its time testing though *not* reporting on various sources of beer.

Holster's guarding job was also rather a sinecure because, although the theoretical idea was that in this restless modern warfare tanks are liable to bob up anywhere in your midst at any time, actually every soldier knows that in manœuvres there is only one tank attack per manœuvre, and when that is due to take place all the military attachés of foreign Powers are invariably there to see it. So whatever bloodcurdling warnings an umpire may give about fleets of tanks being reported two points on your starboard bow, you should always look round first to see if the neighbouring hilltops are crowded or not with Liberian Generals, Chinese Majors and Japanese

We Return from Manœuvres

tourists. If they aren't, then you can tell the umpire to run away and mine himself—under your breath of course.

The tank attack in these last manœuvres of ours did not come to much, largely through an over-zealous military policeman at a cross-roads in the rear who, finding it debouching from a flank, held it up with an enormous hand for half an hour while he let an ammunition column pass. The Argentines and the Greeks probably went away saying our police were wonderful; and Holster in his back area knew that he could take things pretty easy for the rest of the time. No one therefore was more surprised than he—and of course the commander of the beer-supply unit—when late one evening while supper was cooking an armed posse of cavalry under a sergeant emerged out of a nearby wood and told them they were captured.

When Holster had been at length convinced that, though miles behind the lines, the cavalry posse actually was a hostile one, a long argument ensued. Holster threw his rank about a bit and point-blank refused to be captured; the sergeant tapped his carbine and respectfully insisted under pain of instant massacre; till finally this latter slowly realised how very, very far he was from home. He then explained quite frankly that he had been completely lost since eleven o'clock that morning and, incredible as it seemed, Holster's lot were the first troops he'd met. Choking down the suspicion that they'd captured the 'White Horse' fairly early in the day and had only just evacuated it, Holster suggested tentatively that the sergeant allow his posse to be captured instead by Holster's platoon and then they could be provided with accommodation for the night in a barn he pointed out nearby. The sergeant drew himself up and said it was *his* capture and that he personally would die to the last man rather than sell the honour of a crack cavalry regiment. Or words to that effect.

The approach of night, however, and the smell of hot supper from a corner where Private Barrel, platoon cook, was doing his stuff, induced a more reasonable frame of mind and a compromise was arrived at. Neither would capture the other; further, the sergeant would be prepared not to have noticed Holster or anyone else in the neighbourhood at all, and would retire with his men to a lonely

We Return from Manœuvres

bivouac in a barn he had just observed near by. If, in return, some cigarettes and a dixie or so of what Private Barrel was inventing could find their way there . . . ?

Holster promptly agreed.

Next morning the sergeant and his men departed. Holster very carefully pointed out to them the shortest way home. He added that if they kept their eyes open they might be able to make a capture exceeding even in importance the big one that got away last night. He did not, however, add that further up the road he had indicated was an advanced Divisional H.Q. of his own side; nevertheless a few minutes later he got out a bike and just happened to ride in that direction.

It was worth it. A General disturbed in the middle of his breakfast by a respectful Mess-servant who removes his used bacon-and-egg plate and says, 'Beg pardon, Sir, but there's a man outside who says you're his prisoner,' is good. A General subsequently giving vent to his feelings in the road outside, waving a napkin in one hand and a piece of toast and marmalade in the other, is even better. It was a terrifying sight; but the sergeant was being equal to it. Holster innocently passed and repassed twice, catching snatches like, 'But, good God, man, I'm the General', and, 'Can't help that, Sir', and 'I shall report you at once to your Commanding Officer', and 'Orders is orders, Sir, and I 'ave you surrounded.' Finally he left, well pleased.

Holster says he had hoped it'd bring the war to an abrupt end, but apparently the General merely rang up the hostile General—a thing not often done during a real battle—and after some acrimony on either side the enterprising sergeant was called off—with a free pass back to his own side. Then war was resumed two hours late.

II

As I told you last week, our battalion has been largely embroiled in the recent manœuvres, and, except for 'A' Company, an enjoyable time seems to have been had by all. To be frank, 'A' Company Commander, Captain Bayonet, pulled a bit of a boner, though actuated by the best of motives. The troops had all got wet through

We Return from Manœuvres

on some night operations and, as it continued to pour the following day and they were under canvas, had no hope of drying themselves prior to parading at eight p.m. that night for further amphibious battle in the dark. So Bayonet, zealous as ever for his men, had a brain-wave. He promptly got in touch with a local laundry, and by noon a van had appeared and carried off all 'A' Company's tunics and trousers, same being promised back, thoroughly dried, by four p.m. without fail. Bayonet watched it depart, feeling pretty braced at being the only company commander in the battalion clever and considerate enough to have thought of this. A few hours later he was wishing heartily there had been others; it might have helped him carry off a difficult situation. For, 'owing to continued inclement weather', night operations at eight p.m. were suddenly cancelled and the troops were ordered instead to parade at three p.m. for the return march to barracks. A struggle between modesty and discipline in Bayonet's breast resulted in a narrow victory for the latter, and even Colonel Howitzer, when his language became at all decipherable, was heard to admit he'd never seen a parade like it outside of Kipling. A shivering 'A' Company had to unparade hastily and return to barracks later; and now, if you want to live dangerously and know your Rudyard, you've only to mention *The Taking of Lung-tung-pen* anywhere in Bayonet's hearing and see what happens.

On the whole we found, checking up notes afterwards, that our Lieutenant Swordfrog had the best time, even better than Holster, about whom I told you last week. For he wasn't with the battalion at all, being attached, in an information-gleaning capacity, to one of those queer new technical units that our friends the R.E. seem to bud off from the parent body about three or four times a year. Swordfrog says he hasn't fathomed yet quite what it was supposed to be; all he knows is that it was something to do with something which kept it well away from the battle area. Since, in addition, being an experimental affair, it had no official transport of its own for its various instruments and gadgets, local vehicles had had to be specially hired for the occasion, with the result that it looked like nothing on earth. I mean to say, a procession headed by a captain on a horse, followed by a small body of armed men, thence passing

We Return from Manœuvres

variously through some grocers' carts, two milk-floats, one highly unpopular wagon evidently used not so long before to carry rotting wurzels or worse, two hay-wains, a laundry van, and ending up with a dust-cart and a stout quartermaster-sergeant, hardly kindles a martail flame in the onlooker's breast.

The R.E. officer, one Captain Nutbolt, had done his best by fixing bayonets to the wheel hubs of the milk-floats and calling them Boadicea chariots; but his handicap was too much. The only thing lacking seemed to be an elephant and a tank. Not a military tank, a performing-seal tank.

At night-time, so Swordfrog swears, Captain Nutbolt formed his vehicles into a defensive circle round his camp—all except the unpopular wagon, of course, which was parked outside and as far to leeward as possible. The milk-floats weren't included either; they had to be on duty for their early-morning delivery and lived some way off in enemy territory. A hazardous journey, one would think, but so simple is modern warfare that they regularly pierced the hostile outpost lines with nothing more lethal than a signed pass from Captain Nutbolt, who, having finished a day's work by forming a laager for his men, normally strolled down to the local with Swordfrog to get another for themselves.

Life passed uneventfully; indeed, only on one occasion, says Swordfrog, was the unit ever even noticed by anyone from either side; but Nutbolt had the situation well in hand. It was when an irate Major stormed into their camp circle one night, where the troops were sitting round a good fire—there was a nice bit of forest nearby—and started upbraiding Captain Nutbolt for gross dereliction of duty. During his heated remarks it cropped up that he was a Reparations Officer or something, specially charged to see that no damage occurred to private property, and that in particular there were very strict rules about unauthorised wood fires, owing to Thomas Atkins' complete inability to treat wood, whether stacked in a pile outside a house or even in the shape of a wood fence surrounding a garden, as anything but a 'few nice bits o' stick' to be had for the winning.

Swordfrog reports that his opinion of the R.E.'s ability to look

We Return from Manœuvres

after themselves went up considerably when Nutbolt, after hearing the Major out and practically pinning him down to an open accusation of theft, took him to a wagon and showed him therein two large boughs, explaining politely that he knew the rules so well and was so conscious of his duty to his neighbours that he always carried his own firewood with him, legally drawn beforehand from his barrack store.

The Major crumpled, apologised, accepted a whisky, said that he wished all officers were as far-sighted as R.E. officers, and disappeared into the night again—luckily just before the return of one, Sapper Lightfinger, into the circle with what looked like a gate-post on his shoulder.

And Swordfrog tells us his opinion of the R.E. went up even further, when Nutbolt told him that he invariably went on manœuvres with two large boughs, which were strictly reserved for Reparation Officers, and not allowed to be used for firewood on pain of death, or, worse, of seven days' C.B.

A. A.

'LITTLE FLEAS HAVE LESSER FLEAS...'

When I first knew John he was a rather shy, very handsome and completely charming undergraduate. That was eight years ago. John has now turned up again. He is still shy (in rather a different way), still very handsome (also in a different way) and completely charming (in the same way). But there has been a subtle alteration in the world's evaluation of John. Whereas in the old days his commercial value (like mine) was a rather large *minus* amount, I now understand that they pay him two hundred a week to be charming in films. Frankly, I find it a little difficult to follow the world's reasoning. Not, let me hasten to add, that I do not think John is worth two hundred a week. People as nice as John are an asset to the community, and as there are about 48,000,000 people in the community, John only works out at about one-thousandth of a penny a week each all round, which is cheap. The only thing which puzzles me is how, if

‘Little Fleas have Lesser Fleas . . .’

John (1928)—£—300 a year,

John (1936) plus moustache can—£ plus 200 a week.

Still, it's very nice for him and I am very glad. At least I was very glad until yesterday, when I happened to be reading about film stars and realised that they were Always in Financial Difficulties. I suppose it was very thoughtless of me, but it had never occurred to me that John was in want. But it appears that he almost certainly is. When he came to see me he must just have been being brave and concealing it.

It came to me thus. ‘One of the leading business managers in the film industry’ has given an interview in which he gives details of the expenditure of a ‘typical £200-a-week film player’. Apparently John would work about forty weeks a year, giving him £8,000, which seems fair enough. But then he pays:

	£
Booking Agent's Fee (10 per cent)	800
Taxes	800
Business Manager	400
Publicity	240
Wardrobe (professional)	400
Make-up and incidentals, wigs	100
Studio maid or valet	200
Advertising	200

This totals £3,140, so the wretched John is left with only about £5,000. ‘Of this’, we are told, ‘not more than £60 a week should go on living expenses, the other £30 being saved for holidays, retirement, or both.’

I think the reader will agree that this is a pathetic picture. It brings home to one just what a famous screen star meant when he said the other day that many Hollywood stars were ‘being driven off their heads by financial worries’. After all, if you have to scrape along on £60 a week and can't afford to put more than thirty pounds a week in the little box labelled ‘Holidays, Retirement, or Both. . . .’ But quite apart from the pathos of the thing, the list is interesting and, to the layman, rather puzzling. One can understand Studio maid or valet cost £200; Make-up and incidentals seem

‘Little Fleas have Lesser Fleas . . .’

cheap at £100. They cost *me* that, even though neither Mary nor I buy a lot of wigs. Further, Taxes at £800 look, if anything, an under-estimate. It is the other items which seem a bit odd. There is, for instance, Publicity £240 and Advertising £200. This seems a subtle distinction. One always understood that film stars had to pay somebody to steal their jewels or have their children kidnapped, but if this is Publicity, what is Advertising? and if this is Advertising what is Publicity? I suppose there is a professional distinction. The Advertising people arrange for John to be met by the Mayor and Corporation and the Publicity arrange to have him knocked down by cabs. And if he asks the Publicity people to do the cab or the Advertising people to fix up the Mayor they draw themselves up and say it isn't their work. It must need a lot of tact to keep them sorted out.

Then again—the Booking Agent and the Business Manager. I suppose their job is to see that he gets contracts. But what do they do when they have once got him signed up for the next five years? And anyhow, if one of them gets £800 a year for doing it, what does the other get £400 a year for doing? Seeing that he does? I mean to say, on that basis, how about another lad at two hundred a year to see that the first two aren't in league on some dirty business?

Again, that ‘Wardrobe (professional) £400’ item. I suppose an actor *does* have to have a lot of clothes. But I always imagined that if the thing went too ‘costume’ the management bought them. Surely, if you suddenly have to appear in doublet and hose you don't just go out and buy them like that? And how often do you appear in doublet and hose, anyway? So far as I have seen John in two films. In the first he was an escaped convict in an outfit which one could have bought in the Caledonian Road for ten shillings, and in the other he just wore a suit. Two suits, to be exact. So at a modest estimate he still has about £374 10s. od. of this year's wardrobe allowance left. Perhaps that goes to eke out the thirty pounds a week for ‘holiday, retirement, or both’.

Later. I have made enquiries and I have found out about the Business Manager. ‘Most film actors nowadays,’ I am informed,

'Little Fleas have Lesser Fleas . . .'

'employ business managers who in return for a charge of five per cent of the salary, guarantee to take financial worries off the player's shoulders. They ensure that he lives within his means and puts something by for a rainy day.'

Well, reader, John's only getting £8,000 a year, but he's a nice quiet boy with simple tastes. With my business ability I think I can make his ends meet. Good-bye. Address all letters 'Business Manager to John Jones, Blunkhem Studios.' This is the job I've been looking for ever since the beer-tasting proposition fell through.

N. B.

THE POET UNDER ORDERS

*I've been ordered to write a poem about November,
Poetically speaking a much neglected month;
Now if it were April or June or even December
That would be eathy, I could dath off the thing at onth.
But I cannot truthfully say I'm in lov
With the thought of writing about Nov.*

*O melancholy morning, O mournfully muted mavis,
O drearily dripping dungeon, O dirty day!
What is the sense of stopping to stare (like Davies)
When there's nothing whatever to stare at? What do you say?
This metre is missing the boat?
Well, let's try a jollier note.*

*Yoicks! Tally-ho! Tantivy!
(That ought to quicken your gore).
Hounds meet at Muckleton Chivvy;
Hunting has started once more.*

*That big, bony, leather-faced woman
Sitting her horse like a clam?
That Mrs. St. Leger de Withers,
Blooded, they say, in her pram.*

The Poet Under Orders

*Here's 'Ossie' McSpavin. Her seat on
A horse is not very secure;
But 'Ossie's not out to hunt foxes,
She's out after Major Jodd-Poor.*

*Yoicks! Tally-ho! With a whinny,
A neigh-nonny-no, they're away!
They've 'found' in Ticktockerton Spinney,
Bloodthirsty shouts of 'Hooray!'*

*From Lord Brewer, Sam Sewer,
Greta Gurnard, Lady Grimditch,
Herr Hitler, Guy Fawkes,
Old Colonel Bobgobbley and all.*

(For others in at the death, see *The Blinkington and Blobton Times*, circulating in Papthorpe, Pophorpe, Pipthorpe and Little Pupthorpe and all.)

*But perhaps the unfortunate reader would sooner
Have something more modern. How's this (from a crooner)?*

*'Twas in November,
The day was foggy,
Our brakes were groggy,
Our hearts were gay.
We swerved, collided—
Yes, you and I did;
The Fates decided
We'd meet that way.
You too were dreaming,
You too were scheming
Unconscious-lee,
And as we sped on,
By Love's hand led on,
We met, dear, head-on;
For don't you see*

The Poet Under Orders

*It was all intended;
And when we're mended—*

This song is ended.—(Editor.)

C. G. T.

A psychologist declares that a well-lighted, neatly arranged bedroom reveals the woman of system. The remedy, of course, is to pull down the blinds. (14.10.36.)

THE RUSH LIFE GOES ON

I am still leading the rush life.

That is to say, the telephone-bell rings at unnatural hours and a voice with a foreign accent summons one to the film-studio *right away* to put in some snappy dialogue for the great pagoda-scene, featuring a life-and-death struggle between a Chinese bandit and a herd of wild buffaloes against a background of the Yangtse-Kiang in flood.

Okay.

I'll be right down.

I am right down.

The great pagoda-scene is not being shot to-day after all. The wild buffaloes must wait.

Instead we are shooting a close-up of the star, in the lane, picking hyacinths, wild roses and Michaelmas daisies.

Quite a different thing, you see.

One sits down in a corner, near a man with a hammer and a man with a ladder and two men with a tea-trolley to think out a little dialogue.

One is undisturbed by a couple of arc-lamps turned on and beating into one's face, or by the presence of fifty-eight employees of the Pigeon Pie Insurance Company who are all being shown over the studio—or even by a rumour that some of the buffaloes have

The Rush Life Goes On

got out of hand and are stampeding the Monastery Garden set in the next studio.

One sits and writes.

After a time one stops writing.

No dialogue can go on for ever, even in a close-up of somebody picking hyacinths, wild roses and so on.

One sits, not writing.

Fancy, as usual, takes a flight.

How difficult it must be to be a film star and have to try all the time—as they do—to avoid publicity! How trying to have to go on earning and earning and earning more and more money, because the only thing one really wants to do is to retire to one's own tiny shack in the mountains of Patagonia and live there in perfect silence and solitude, just breeding potatoes.

I find myself wondering whether at Little-Fiddle-on-the-Green I ought not to try to avoid publicity, employing in order to do so the technique of the film world.

Supposing I put on Charles's oldest grey flannel trousers—the ones that I meant for the November jumble sale, only Charles doesn't know it—and a huge sombrero—Stop! Where should I get a huge sombrero in the village? Nowhere. Better make it the summer-before-last's Hawaiian pink-and-yellow straw that one thought at the time of purchase would be rather nice for the garden, but it never really was.

Very well; Charles's oldest grey flannel trousers, the pink-and-yellow straw, and either a blue striped shirt—Charles again—or a navy-blue sweater with a high collar. (I haven't got one, and should have to knit it when I had time.)

Could one do more in an endeavour to avoid attracting attention?

Well, yes, one probably could. A film star would never be content with just that amount of incognito. One had better have a couple of borzois in leash, and perhaps a uniformed Hungarian chauffeur driving a red-and-black-and-silver saloon car following one very slowly up the village street. *But one would walk, not drive in the car.*

The simple life.

The Rush Life Goes On

The out-door, open-air, country-bred girlie.

The flight from publicity.

The unostentatious appearance.

Little-Fiddle-on-the-Green would realise at once that one's only idea was *not to be noticed*.

And then this business of the hut in Patagonia. If *only* one could settle down there—quite, quite alone—just being domestic and never wearing anything at all except the grey flannel trousers, the Hawaiian hat and the high-necked blue sweater.

But will a hundred-thousand-dollar contract do it? No.

Will a five-hundred-thousand-dollar contract do it? No again. Not even with a percentage on the gross takings of the film thrown in.

There is obviously nothing for it but to go on signing-up five-hundred-thousand-dollar contracts for years and years ahead in the hope of one day being able to afford the Patagonian hut and the potato-breeding. It'll take a very long time and a great many contracts, but what does that matter? We all have our trials.

But the trials of a dialogue-writer are not the same as those of a film star.

They are in fact quite extraordinary different.

'Pardon me, baby, but would you mind gettin' the hell out of here? You've parked yourself right under the rain, and the boys'll be turning it on for the next shot just about now. There! Didn't I say so?'

E. M. D.

'After all,' writes a critic, 'what is the average routine film to an experienced producer?' Put briefly, a challenging, soul-shattering, super-colossal epic. (4.11.36.)

Studies in International Amity

STUDIES IN INTERNATIONAL AMITY

From 'The Daily Clarion', Nov. 2nd

GERMANY NEEDS BRITAIN'S FRIENDSHIP

Friendly references to this country were made by General Goering at Munichsbad yesterday. In the course of a speech to the *Nicht-raucher* (or League of Schoolboy Bombers) he said: 'England is to blame for all the difficulties with which the German people has now to contend. The time has come to tighten our belts. It is the Leader's will—and we shall tighten them gladly, as one man, knowing that it is for the Fatherland. But we do not forget whom we have to thank for the necessity of a duty so ungrudgingly shouldered. A great and free nation will not long submit to having its belt tightened at the behest of a foreign country. Every ship that still lies at the bottom of Scapa Flow is Germany's by right, and, in the name of peace, she demands them back. I say that we shall get them. I say that not until the last scrap of German steel, stolen from us by the shameful Treaty* of Versailles—the most monstrous act of injustice ever inflicted on the victors by the vanquished in the whole history of the world—not until the last bolt and rivet have been restored to us will it be possible for us to take our place honourably in the comity of the nations.'

Later.

Official quarters in Berlin are reticent on the subject of General Goering's address. Nothing is known at the *Blundervorst* of a demand for the return of the ships scuttled at Scapa Flow, but it is understood that the speech was intended mainly for internal consumption.

From 'The Daily Clarion', Nov. 3rd

MUSSOLINI MAKES PEACE OFFER

'I offer the world peace,' said Signor Mussolini, speaking from the mouth of a cannon at Fritto Misto yesterday. After explaining the details of a scheme for training three million boys between the ages of six and nine in the use of the hand-grenade, he continued, 'I extend the hand of friendship, frankly and unreservedly, to Great Britain. But let them beware how they grasp it. It is a two-edged

Studies in International Amity

hand forged on the anvil of sacrifice in the passionate flame of a people's implacable renunciation. The indivisible sword of Fascism, brandished on the muzzles of twelve million resolute rifles, proclaims with one heart and one voice Italy's unshakable determination to follow the path that fate has marked out for her. Italy desires peace, but she will brook no interference from anybody.' Signor Mussolini concluded with a cordial reference to Albania.

Writing in the inspired *Macaroni di Roma*, Signor Dado enlarges on the importance of Anglo-Italian accord and emphasises the sincerity of the Duce's offer to the British people. 'We have had about enough of their impertinence,' he adds.

*From the Correspondence Columns of 'The Daily Clarion',
Nov. 5th*

Sir,—As the Rector of a small parish in Northumberland who had the honour of an audience with Herr Hitler while in Germany at the beginning of last month, I know that we have nothing to fear from the New Germany. 'Friendship with England', said the Leader to me, 'is an essential part of our foreign policy, and we in Germany are at a loss to understand why the British people are not more ready to grasp the hand that is held out to them.' These are memorable words. Let us take them to heart.

Yours, etc.,
NORTHUMBERLAND RECTOR.

Sir,—I write to protest in the strongest possible terms against your use of the word 'wilful' as applied to Mussolini in your leading article of November 3rd. Why you should go out of your way to insult one who, besides being one of the noblest figures the world has ever known, is also the greatest potential force for peace in Europe to-day, passes my comprehension. When this great man with almost incredible generosity offers his friendship to a country which has so cruelly misunderstood and reviled him, surely we should have, if not the gratitude, at least the common sense to welcome him with open arms?

Yours, etc.,
NO LONGER A SUBSCRIBER.

Studies in International Amity

From 'The Daily Clarion', Nov. 6th

GERMAN GESTURE TO BRITAIN

Germany's desire not to do anything calculated to alienate British public opinion was reflected in speeches made by Nazi leaders at various centres yesterday. Typical extracts from these speeches are:

'England possesses nine-tenths of the habitable globe.'—*Dr. Goebbels, at Goeringbad.*

'It is intolerable.'—*General Goering at Goebbelsburg.*

MEDITERRANEAN PEACE PACT ENVISAGED?

'I am bristling with bayonets. . . .'—*Signor Mussolini at Porto di Fermento.*

H. F. E.

'I really cannot imagine what these so-called sex novelists are thinking of,' declares a woman writer. Which earns her ten marks for good character and nought for imagination. (4.11.36.)

THE 'BAR MINHEIRO'

'Miner's Bar', you would call it at home. We are rather proud of it. It is not given to everybody to carry the civilising torch of the night club into the remoter Portuguese hills. Of course Vouzela always had its 'Cantina', where the countrymen drink the country wine, the mules outside in the cobbled street awaiting a nonexistent closing-time, but, as Charles says, 'this is the real thing'.

And, as he also says, 'Exclusiveness is the keynote'. We achieve this by a red drop-curtain on rings over the inner door that hides our festivities and minimises the whispering of the handsome young men in black capes and sombreros who hang about with guitars that break into soulfulness every time Margarida passes through. They stand in outer darkness, for we of the 'Bar Minheiro' are the élite. Before your name is scratched—by the diamond in the ring of

The 'Bar Minheiro'

Padre Jaime—on the little mirror over the pine-cone fire, there are tests. You must be tested in good-fellowship, learn the difference between Knave and King on Portuguese cards, and be able to make intelligible signs in English and Portuguese. So far we number six members:

Padre Jaime.

Charles.

Senhor Almaz.

Bernardo Caixa.

Roberto Pinto Gouvea.

Me.

The Padre is a great go-between. He spent five years of his youth in California in pre-film days and speaks English with a raw coarse American accent that contrasts strongly with his lapses into the slick flowing civilities of his own tongue. He is a gentleman, and a bit of a scholar too, for he translated the Portuguese verse in pencil on the wall to:

*'It was a miracle divine
That changed the water into wine,
Lord save us from the ways of men
That want to change it back again!'*

The charcoal drawings on the low ceiling are by Bernardo Caixa. As art they are not much catch, but the pit headgear frame and the geological section between Lisbon and Oporto owe nothing to surrealism.

Charles laid it down early that the essentials of all successful night clubs are:

1. *Difficult to get in.* (As long as we limit membership to six it's going to be pretty difficult to get in.)
2. *Difficulty to get out.* (As there is no closing time in Portugal and drinks are very cheap it's frightfully difficult to get out.)
3. *Drinks.* (They are much better than their names. 'Vignac', 'Ametista', 'Maceira', and 'Aguardiente' are among the little things sent to try us.)
4. *Dancing.* (When Margarida and Juliana have finished washing up they change into peasant's dress, wooden shoes and castanets.)

The 'Bar Minheiro'

Some of the guitars are called in from the passage for this. Gentlemen are not allowed to place their arm round the waist of a lady during a dance in Vouzela. Charles has twice been nearly assassinated over this point.)

5. *Snacks.* (Have you ever taken some half-pound trout that you caught earlier in the evening, spitted them on green withies, and grilled them by hand over a red pine-cone fire? And are there any roast chestnuts like Portugal's?)

6. *Cabaret.*

7. *A Police Raid.*

As regards the cabaret, our two permanent artists are Oliveira and 'Roo-tu-Coo'. Oliveira is a dark young man with flashing white teeth, equally proficient at playing on guitar- or heart-strings. He takes the floor in a black hat and cloak and looks very like a famous port-wine poster.

'Roo-tu-Coo (so called from his famous imitation of a wood-pigeon) is a swarthy shepherd of the hills. His proper name is unknown, and he is very shy and a little deficient, but the world's best imitator of things of the wild.

Our cabaret always begins a little diffidently, but warms up towards the end. It starts on these lines:

ITEM 1. *Imitation of call of great snowy owl* ('Roo-tu-Coo'). Rather flat, as it's too early in the evening—apparently much too early for the snowy owl, who calls rather nervously in a high tenor.

ITEM 2. *Love ditty in minor key.* (Sung and played by Oliveira, who is trying to catch the eye of Margarida peeping through the curtain.)

3. *Senhor Almaz manipulating radio.* (Ringing rapid changes on Europe. We have a little hot-air from Madrid, a little back-chat from Lisbon, and Fat-Stock prices from England. The latter is listened to with tremendous attention, as it is thought here that England is the Chief Justice of the European Courts and that momentous words are being spoken.)

And so the evening goes on. There is an attentive crowd on the cobbles outside the shuttered windows, and beyond the red curtain the passage is stiff with cloaks and sombreros. Oliveira gets more

The "Bar Mineiro"

and more impassioned and breaks string after string. 'Roo-tu-Coo', refreshed with 'Aguardiente', becomes more and more confident and correct in his bird imitations, until at length a small finch chirping in the hedgeside is made to deliver its notes with bull-like aggression.

I think our cabaret would satisfy those in search of something new.

The police raid was a first-class affair. None of your policemen in dinner-jackets trying to buy a green chartreuse and pronounce it properly at the same time, but horse, foot and guns. For as long as we of the 'Bar Mineiro' were locally credited with being anything between the Ku Klux Klan and a new political party we were all right. But some of the disgruntled dwellers in outer darkness threw out broad hints in our market town of Vizeu that a band of international gun-runners were running munitions into Red Spain from headquarters known as the 'Bar Mineiro'. The garrison at Vizeu turned out, marched twenty-five miles, surrounded us, called on us to surrender, were duly satisfied, and, being admitted and entertained four at a time, called it a night.

None of your night clubs in town has had a raid like that. Charles was very bucked about it. It was, as he says, the complete lid, climax and apex of the 'Bar Mineiro'.

T. R. H.

'Take off your clothes, lie down in a hot bath and what do you hear?' asks a doctor. The telephone starting to ring in the hall. (30.12.36.)

THE CARAWAYS AT BREAKFAST

'Darling D. and M.' wrote Laurence from somewhere on the South Coast,—'Thanks awfully for the cake. We beat West Court 7-1 yesterday. I didn't score any goals, but two were from my passes. Rhino was awfully pleased. We play Wickford Hall on Wednesday. Can I have Henderson mi. to stay in the hols? *Tons* of love, Laurence. P.S.—Only ten more days!'

'What revoltingly typical letters the child writes,' said Stephen, passing it back to his mother.

The Caraways at Breakfast

'Yes,' agreed his father from behind a newspaper, 'they're no different from the ones you wrote six years ago.'

'Nice crack, Pop,' said Stephen. 'Give the gentleman a cigar.'

Mr. Caraway frowned and began to say something, then changed his mind and went on reading.

'I think Laurence writes very good letters,' said Mrs. Caraway. 'He spells properly too.'

'Does he?' said Christopher. 'What about that lecture on Haughticulture they were going to have the other day?'

'Besides,' said Stephen, 'it isn't spelling that matters. Anyone ought to be able to spell at eleven. What he says is so dull. Why doesn't he tell us some of the things old Rhino did during the week? They used to be exciting enough when I was there.'

'Yes,' said Christopher. 'In my time he used to beat the First Eleven when they lost a match.'

'He *didn't*, Christopher!' said Mrs. Caraway, horrified. 'I don't believe it.'

'You don't have to,' said Christopher. 'We did, vividly.'

'Mr. Bryant is always *charming* to us,' said Mrs. Caraway; 'I'm sure he's a splendid headmaster.'

'He is a splendid headmaster—on the platform at Victoria,' said Stephen. 'He doesn't even pull the boys' hair when their parents are actually in sight.'

'Compared with old Rhino,' said Christopher, 'Squeers was a kindly soul, absurdly fussy over his pupils' comfort.'

'Rhino's name', added Stephen, 'will go down to posterity along with those of Captain Bligh and Judge Jeffreys.'

'By the way', said Christopher, 'you'll write and tell Laurence we can't have any of his friends here, won't you? We're full up.'

'Why shouldn't the poor darling have his friends here?' said Mrs. Caraway. 'They behave much better than yours.'

'Well, I warn you,' said Stephen, 'it's either Henderson mi. or me. I shan't stay in a house that's crawling with foul little boys.'

'Then that removes Christopher's objection,' said Mr. Caraway, still behind his paper.

'*Another* cigar for the gentleman,' said Stephen.

The Caraways at Breakfast

'It's a pity you're too old to have your head smacked,' said his father.

'You're too old to smack it, anyway,' said Stephen. 'And head-smacking is quite Out in the modern home. Not that this *is* a modern home,' he added, looking round critically at the furniture.

'How late do you want to be this morning, Stephen?' asked Mrs. Caraway with the satisfied feeling that she was scoring heavily in the last round.

'Gosh! is that *right*?' Stephen's glance at the clock, his disappearance from the room, and the banging of the front door were noted by the rest of the family with the calm approval of spectators who watch an old ritual faithfully performed. Stephen daily attended what was in fact a public school; to his family it appeared rather to be a sort of club at which he met his friends, played squash, ate a large but definitely uneatable lunch—('Honestly, Mother, it was *foul*')—read in the library, acted now and then in various dramatic societies, and carried on a perpetual war against the authorities. Stephen's reports were a tribute to the ingenuity of school-masters. They said the same thing every term, but miraculously in different ways.

'He'll have to take a taxi,' commented Mr. Caraway. 'Something ghastly was threatened if he was late again this week.'

'He'd be late on a fire-engine this morning,' said Christopher, looking at his watch. Christopher's office, though nominally open at 9.30 was empty of important people till quarter-past ten. Christopher usually arrived at ten past.

William's first public utterance this morning was a complaint.

'*Must* I finish this, Mummy?' he asked, looking up from his porridge. 'It's beastly.'

It seemed to William as if he had been eating this porridge for hours, and yet there it was. He was now stirring it round and round in the hope that it would somehow evaporate. As he expected, his question was ignored. Mr. Caraway was reading out a paragraph from the paper.

'... and has resulted in some loss of life,' he concluded. There was a silence.

The Caraways at Breakfast

'So what?' said Christopher.

His father opened his mouth to speak.

'You're going to say, "Talk English, please",' said Christopher.

'I was, and I do say it. Why can't you talk English?'

'My dear old father,' said Christopher, 'if there *is* a word more English than "so", which I doubt, it's "what". Don't you agree?'

'Perhaps. The idiom's American, though.'

'Idiom. Father, *idiom*? Why, you're talking Greek! Talk English.'

'Oh, must we have all this again?' groaned Mrs. Caraway.

'William, do hurry up; you'll be late, and Miss Harrison will be *so* upset.'

'She won't,' said William mysteriously.

'Of course she will; she always is.'

'She won't be this time,' said William importantly. They were listening to him! He swallowed a spoonful of porridge in his excitement.

'Whyever not?'

'Cos she's in bed, and Johnny Parsons says she's dreadfully ill.'

'Heavens! You never told us. I'll ring up Dr. Parsons to see that it's nothing infectious.'

'Miss Holroyd takes us instead,' went on William. 'She's awfully fat.'

'Are they still teaching you to make silly little mats out of coloured straw?' asked Christopher.

'No,' replied William. 'Mummy, can I have two apples to take with me? Most of the others do.'

'Well, I'm off,' said Christopher, getting up. 'I've got to buy some things before work.' He strolled out of the room.

'*Can* I have two apples, Mummy?'

'Hurry up and finish your breakfast, William.' Mrs. Caraway sighed. 'If only everyone would do everything ten minutes earlier in this house!'

When William had been hustled off to his kindergarten (with one apple), breakfast was over.

Breakfast to some people is just a glass of orange-juice in bed.

A. K. M.

INDEX OF TITLES

- ABRACADABRA, 39
 Actress, The, 175
 Adjustments, 46
 Agonies of an Adolescent, 533
 Alfred of the Talkies, 537
 American Tourist at Home, The, 294
 And Now All This, 500
 Antique Clock, The, 14
 Arrival at Port, 568
 As Others Hear Us, 547, 553
 'As You (Apparently) Like It', 369
 At a Charity Dinner, 403
 At the Front, 96

 BAKERLOONACY, 156
 Ballybun Soviet, The, 167
 'Bar Mineiro', The, 653
 Bathroom Hogs, 504
 Be a Little Man, 321
 Beginner's Guide to Ski-ing, The, 574
 Beginner's Guide to the Organ, The, 494
 Best Man, The, 106
 Blue Bulb, The, 454
 Bogchester Chronicles, The, 628
 Bottle's Progress, The, 252
 Brains and the Golfer, 360
 Bus Conductors, 386
 Business for Pleasure, 608
 'By Any Name . . .', 487

 CANDIDATE FOR THE FORCE, A, 73
 Caraways at Breakfast, The, 656
 Case of the Pursuit, The, 566
 Cautionary Tales for the Army, 123
 Cheaper Currency, 513
 Chicken-pox Sweepstake, The, 348
 Chinese Vases, The, 237
 Commercial Drama, The, 25
 Con, 65
 Counter-Claim, 447

 DAILY DIFFICULTIES, 410
 Dead Cat, The, 212
 Deal with China, A, 130
 Defaulters, 91
 Definitions from a Scots Dictionary, 194
 Derby, The, 484
 Diary of a Town-Dweller, 562
 Diet for an Invalid, 297
 Double-Faced Conduct, 390

 ECONOMIES AT WHITEHALL, 299
 Elizabeth Outwitted, 182
 Embroidery, 246
 Error in Tactics, An, 157
 Escalator, The, 323
 Expert Tries It, The, 496
 Explaining to Elizabeth, 571

 FEW EXAMPLES, A, 214
 Fighting Through, 279

Index

- First Aid for Last Nights, 394
 French Mastering, 243
- GEORGE'S LION (Outposts of Empire), 407
 George's Wife's Baby, 29
 Getting the Drop on Him, 512
 Gift of Speech, The, 34
 Gladiator, The (Outposts of Empire), 469
 Golden Promises, 160
 'Gölferdämmerung', 438
 Grass Valley Armistice, The, 101
 Great Liar, A, 231
 'Green Jay, The', 209
 Guide-Book to Insomnia, A, 459
 Guide for Settlers in New York City, A, 274
 Guide to Short Story Writing, A, 266
- HAMMOCK FALLACY, THE, 269
 Hautboys and Torches, 579
 Help! 255
 Hiccup, The, 49
 History in the Making, 144
 Hold-up, The, 634
 Honest Man, An, 479
 Honours List, The, 482
 Horrors of Peace, The, 286
 How *Not* to say Good-bye, 224
 How to Build a House, 180
 How to Buy Things, 22
 How to Dock a Ship, 302
 How to Run a Bassoon Factory, 541
- ICED POLLY (Outposts of Empire), 462
 If This Should Meet the Eye, 412
- Impossible Stories, 602
 Influence of the Thriller, The, 508
 Incident of the Ex-President, The, 356
 In Praise of the Tote, 355
 In Search of Altitude, 520
 Inspiration, The, 203
 Intensive Culture of the Upper Lip, 112
 In the Air in 1940, 104
 Interview with Gaffer, 620
- 'JAMAIS', 232
 Jane and Michael, 401
 Just the Reverse, 337
- KEEPING CHICKENS, 201
 King takes Count, 544
- LANGUAGE DIFFICULTY, THE, 141
 Last Straw, The, 163
 Last Wopse of Summer, The, 12
 Lays of Learning, 305
 Leer of Père Junot, The, 626
 Lesson, The, 58
 Lessons for Lowbrows, 556
 Letters to the Secretary of a Golf Club, 558
 Library Chairs, 405
 Lions at Play, 115
 Little Fish, 591
 'Little Fleas have Lesser Fleas . . .', 643
 Little Plays for Amateurs, 4
 Logic of Ententes, The, 70
 Lonely Soldier, The, 82
 Lord Chariot's Gaffe, 373
 Lower Fourth Essays, 546
- MAENEAD, THE, 51
 'Man in the Stalls, The', 20

Index

- Marcus, The Man-Eating Fish, 313
 Maximum and Minimum, 427
 Melodic Dress, 258
 Military Intelligence, 10
 Misleading Cases, 434
 Missing Monkeys, The, 220
 Miss Pellow, 632
 Mixed Modes, 515
 Modern Transformation Scene,
 The, 340
 More from the Hawthorns, 490
 More Jackdaw in Georgia, 339
 More Reprisals, 148
 More Stage News, 429
 Motorieties, 18
 Mr. Porter Does the Filing, 623
 Mr. Vade Mecum Abroad, 28
 Mud Larks, The, 119, 133
 Mystery Fish, A, 288
 NATURAL HISTORY NOTES, 474
 New Chivalry, The, 327
 New News, The, 71
 'Non-Legal Advice', 430
 Nothing in the Slot, 365
 'Nouns of Assemblage', 422
 ON A PRESENTATION CIGAR, 301
 On Choosing a Piano, 32
 On the Spy-Trail, 79, 86
 Once Upon a Time, 48
 Our Annual Massacre, 53
 Our Beauty Column, 151
 Our Colonies, 36
 Our Conquerors, 423
 Our Innocent Subalterns, 129
 Our Institute, 507
 Our Legal Pantomime, 396
 Our Literary Advice Department,
 62
 Our Locust Campaign, 431
 Our New Army of Women, 117
 Our Office, 614
 Our Tudor Colony, 455
 Out! 196
 Outlaw, The, 576
 Owner-Driver and the Magistrate,
 The, 449
 Ottoman, The, 198
 PASSING OF ANDREW, THE, 189
 People I Don't Like, 392
 Persia, 421
 Pills, The, 552
 Pilmonine, 234
 Plaintiff of the Third-Class Passen-
 ger, The, 236
 Play-Repairers, The, 363
 Plot Revealed, The, 401
 Poet Under Orders, The, 646
 Point-to-Point, 592
 Pome Hawker, The, 306
 Pounds, Proverbs and Pence, 472
 Power of the Press, The, 218
 Presence of Mind, 176
 Press Colourman, A, 260
 Prisoner of Tunisia, A, 344
 Programme, The, 205
 Propaganda in the Balkans, 153
 Punter's Solace, The, 359
 Putting Things Right, 387
 QUESTION OF THE NUDE, A, 98
 RACING AS A BUSINESS, 186
 Red Indian Wedding, A, 425
 Reflections of a Man of Strict Hon-
 our on Being About to Eat His
 Hat, 599

Index

- Remarkable Experiences of a Medium, 226
 Remnants Half-Price, 528
 Rescue, The, 146
 Restraint, 549
 Rhum Babaists, 376
 Right to Kill, The, 289
 Rome v. Tuscans, 451
 Rural Dialogue, A, 192
 Rush Life Goes On, The, 648

 SALUTATION TO SLEUTHS, 441
 Scandinavia from Within, 581
 Should an Author Tell? 55
 Simple Stories, 319
 Sincerest Form of Flattery, The, 137
 Sluggard, The, 67
 'Small Ads.', 169
 Soggs of a Sub-Bad, 535
 Some Hounds, 332
 Some Useful Phrases, 531
 Somerset Mystery, A, 229
 Somewhere in Var, 333
 Song of the Cat-Burglar's Daughter, 372
 Songs of Ignorance, 606
 Songs of a Sub-Man, 519
 'Speech, Speech!' 480
 Spin on the Solent, A, 523
 Stew, 108
 Sting in the Tail, The, 498
 Stories for Uncles, 9
 Studies in International Amity, 651
 Suburban Scenes, 261
 Summer in Arcady, 315
 Sunbeam: A Tragedy, 309
 Sunk Without Trace, 611
 Super-Pipe, The, 127
 Suzanne's Banking Account, 172
 Sweethearts and Wives, 325

 TAP-ROOM, THE, 124
 That Flu, 273
 Theatre Rhymes, 278
 Third Bathe, The, 240
 Those Perfect Children, 419
 Thriller, The, 385
 Tommy Brown, Auctioneer, 75
 Très Sec, 33
 Trials of Topsy, The, 351
 Twenty Years On, 179
 Two Lords of the Lost Island, The, 250

 'UMMING-SLOOTH, THE, 617
 Unskilled Labour, 254

 VERY MIXED DOUBLES, 596

 WALLET AT HIS BACK, A, 382
 Wasp, The, 417
 Watch Dogs, The, 92, 109
 We Return from Manoeuvres, 638
 What is Man? 477
 'Who would be a Blood Sport?' 444
 Why I Bought a—Car, 283
 Winter Sport, 42
 Winter Warfare, 329
 Wise and Foolish Virgins, The, 132
 Wool-Winder, The, 83

 YEAR'S PROSPECTS, THE, 1

INDEX OF AUTHORS

- à BECKETT, P., 10
 Allen, Inglis, 220, 348
 Armstrong, Anthony, 581, 638

 BALCHIN, NIGEL, 541, 579, 608, 643
 Barber, D. H., 552
 Barrington, Patrick, 519, 535
 Bett, S. G., 634
 Battle, J. S., 407
 Bird, A. W., 179, 365
 Boas, Guy, 278, 305
 Bower, Mrs. B. E., 556
 Bretherton, C. H., 313
 Brightwell, L. R., 130
 Brown, C. L. M., 356
 Brownlee, L. D., 104
 Bryant, Gerard, 596
 Bryass, B. O., 546

 CALVER, R. H. S., 146
 Campbell, Duncan, 482
 Carter, Desmond, 156
 Caswell, J. B., 490
 Chalmers, P. R., 65
 Chandler, Miss B. W., 203
 Chavanne, Madame, 344
 Clark, Dudley, 419
 Clement-Brown, R. E., 504
 Colville, Rex, 192, 196
 Cooper, F. G., 429
 Cox, A. B., 258, 266
 Crawford, L. I., 153

 Creswell, Bulkeley, 18
 Crowther, Alan, 412
 Cundy, C. W., 157

 DALTON, MORAY, 260, 405
 Davey, H. N., 129
 Deans, F. H., 151
 de Fraine, Miss Joan, 523
 d'Egville, Alan, 198
 Delafield, Miss E. M., 547, 553, 648
 Drennan, Max, 167, 226
 Drennan, W. St. G., 75, 79, 86
 Dunn, Miss Mary, 507, 508

 ECKERSLEY, ARTHUR, 71
 Eden, Timothy, 382
 Edgar, E. J., 255
 Elias, Frank, 117
 Ellis, D. C., 115, 124
 Ellis, H. F., 474, 484, 515, 620, 651
 Emtage, J. B., 574

 FARJEON, MISS E., 528
 Farjeon, J. Jefferson, 520
 Fay, Stanley J., 29, 172
 Ferguson, Rachel, 394, 396, 459
 fforde, Miss P., 454, 531
 Filmore, L. E., 22
 Fish, W. W. Blair, 33, 123
 Fitzpatrick, J., 231
 Fleming, Berry, 274, 294
 Fox-Smith, Miss C., 98, 108, 325

Index

- French, C. O., 62
 Fyleman, Rose, 386
- GARSTIN, CROSBIE, 112, 119, 133
 Gillman, W. H., 250
 Gladden, W., 626
 Graham, Virginia, 592, 602
 Graves, C. L., 372, 392
 Graves, C. L., and Lucas, E. V., 28
 34
 Gullick, L. B., 243, 360
 Guthrie, F. Anstey, 12
- HALL, P. A., 438, 447, 451, 494
 Hamber, T. R., 462, 469, 513, 653
 Hancox, H. R., 302
 Harwood, A. C., 180
 Hashim, A. G., 160
 Hawtrey, J. W., 297
 Heath-Jones, E., 512
 Herbert, A. P., 214, 261, 351, 434,
 487
 Hodgkinson, T., 254, 359
 Horsefield, R. B., 425
 Hyndman, S. H., 101
- JARVIS, C. S., 431
 Jeffs, E. H., 209
 Jenkins, Ernest, 175
 Johnston, Alec, 96
- KENDALL, MAJOR, 273, 417, 477,
 479
 Keown, Eric, 444, 562, 599, 617
 Kilpatrick, Mrs. F. A., 182, 224,
 410, 549
 Knox, E. V., 51, 240, 283, 323, 333,
 441
- LAMB, G. F., 401
 Landau, L. G., 363, 430
- Langley, F. O., 20, 92, 109
 Lawrence, Michael, 337
 Laws, A. Gordon, 55
 Leake, Annette, 571
 Learoyd, P. M., 576
 Lee, R. T., 205
 Lehmann, R. C., 9, 49, 83
 Lewis, M. A., 148, 176
 Lipscomb, W. P., 137, 289
 Lucas, E. V., 48, 237, 252, 423, 427
 Lucas, E. V., and Graves, C. L., 28,
 34
- MACHELL, B. W., 498
 Mackay, Mrs., 141
 McLellan, R. S., 189
 Mallett, Richard, 385, 566, 611
 Marsh, S. G., 299
 Marshall, Archibald, 319, 465
 Meade, Walter, 421
 Metcalfe, H. W., 523, 628
 Milne, A. A., 1, 4, 42, 58, 163
 Milne, A. K., 656
 Milne, Angela, 614, 623
 Mountney, R. P., 309
- NASH, GEORGE C., 558
 Nott-Bower, E. E., 332
- PEACH, L. du GARDE, 269, 315
 Pepper, J. W., 236
 Pezare, C. J., 91
 Phillips, Gordon, 422
 Playfair, I. S. O., 286, 329
 Polak, A. L., 246
 Preston-Tewart, A., 201
 Punshon, E. R., 340
- RANKIN, KENNETH, 544

Index

- Rice, F. A., 234
Richards, W. E., 321
Rigby, Reginald, 32
Robinson, E. S. K., 212
Rowan, Hill, 25
- SALUSBURY, F. G. H., 373
Scriven, R. C., 632
Seaman, Owen, 70, 132, 144, 355,
403
Sellar, W. C., and Yeatman, R. J.,
500
Seymour, W. K., 339, 376
Slade, Gurney, 232
Smith, Bertram, 46
Smith, E. B., 39
Soloman, G. G., 169, 327
Squire, John C., 606
Stalker, Philip A., 496
Sterne, Ashley, 73
Struther, Jan, 288, 472
Symns, J. M., 401
- TALBOT, A. J., 449
Taylor, Cyril G., 646
- Thomson, A. A., 480
Travers, Ben, 229
- VAIZEY, MRS., 82
- WATSON, F., 14
Watson, R., 194
Wells, W. A., 106
Westron, H. F., 591
Westrup, W., 36
White, E. P., 186, 301, 306, 455
White, R. F., 218, 387
Whitnall, S. E., 53
Wilson, T. P. C., 127
Wodehouse, P. G., 67
Woodruff, Douglas, 537
Wotherspoon, Ralph, 279
Wright, H. O. S., 390
- YEATMAN, R. J., 369
Yeatman, R. J., and Sellar, W. C.,
500
- ZIEGLER, W. K., 568